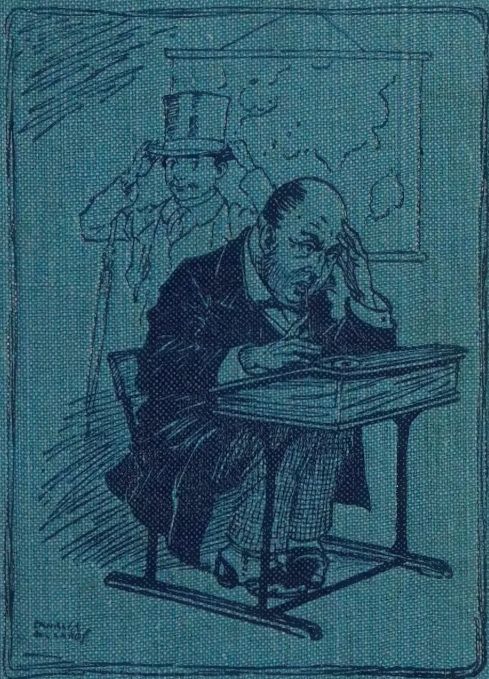


VICE VERSA

A FARCICAL FANTASTIC PLAY
IN THREE ACTS



BY
F. ANSTEY

London : SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15 Waterloo Place

Harry Wingate
December 1946

VICE VERSÂ

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SALTED ALMONDS. 2nd Impression.
Crown 8vo, 6s.

THE BRASS BOTTLE. 5th Impression.
(WATERLOO LIBRARY) Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d.

Limp Red Cloth—Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d. each

VICE VERSA ; or, a Lesson to Fathers.

A FALLEN IDOL.

THE GIANT'S ROBE.

THE PARIAH.

THE TALKING HORSE ; and other
Tales.

LYRE AND LANCET. With 24
Full-page Illustrations.

London : SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15 Waterloo Place, S.W.

VICE VERSÂ

A FARCICAL FANTASTIC PLAY

IN THREE ACTS

BY

F. ANSTEY

To ~~Anna~~

~~from~~

~~Ward~~

~~July 1910~~

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15, WATERLOO PLACE

1910

All rights reserved

Copyright, 1910.

London, by SMITH, ELDER & Co.

Boston, U.S.A, by WALTER H. BAKER & Co.

The Amateur Fee for each and every representation of this play is five guineas, payable in advance to the Author's sole agents, Messrs. Samuel French, Ltd., 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.

CHARACTERS.

PAUL BULTITUDE, Colonial Produce Broker of Mincing Lane, and 170, Westbourne Terrace (*afterwards—except in appearance—his son, Dick*).

DICK BULTITUDE, his son, age nearly 15 (*afterwards—except in appearance—his father, Paul*).

BARBARA BULTITUDE, his daughter, age nearly 14.

MARMADUKE PARADINE, his brother-in-law.

DR. GRIMSTONE, Principal of Crichton House School, Market Rodwell.

DULCIE GRIMSTONE (*his daughter*).

MR. BLINKHORN, M.A., Oxon., Senior Assistant Master at Crichton House.

MR. TINKLER, B.A., Camb., Junior Assistant Master at Crichton House.

TIPPING	}	Boys at Crichton House.
CHAWNER		
JOLLAND		
BIDDLECOMB		
COKER		
COGGS		
KIFFIN		

CECILY (age 12)	}	Small friends of Barbara's.
PETER (age 9)		

THEIR NURSE.

BOALER, Butler	}	At 170, Westbourne Terrace.
RHODA, Parlour-maid		
ELLEN, House-maid		

Other Boys at Crichton House.

ACT I.

SCENE 1. Mr. Bultitude's Library. *Time*, about 6 o'clock on an evening late in January.

SCENE 2. A Classroom at Crichton House. *Time*, about 8 o'clock the same evening.

ACT II.

A Classroom at Crichton House. *Time*, an afternoon some days later.

ACT III.

Mr. Bultitude's Library. *Time*, the same evening, about 7.30.

COPY OF THE "FIRST NIGHT" PROGRAMME

AT THE

COMEDY THEATRE, LONDON.

VICE VERSA.

A Farcical Fantastic Play in Three Acts.

BY

F. ANSTEY.

THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 10, 1910.

PAUL BULTITUDE (<i>Colonial Produce Broker, of Mincing Lane, and 170, Westbourne Terrace; after- wards—except in appearance— his son, Dick</i>)	Mr. Fred Volpé.
DICK BULTITUDE (<i>his son, afterwards — except in appearance — his father, Paul</i>)	Mr. Spencer Trevor.
BARBARA BULTITUDE (<i>his daughter</i>)	Miss Agnes Glynne.
MARMADUKE PARADINE (<i>his brother- in-law</i>)	Mr. C. M. Lowne.
DR. GRIMSTONE (<i>Principal of Crichton House School, Market Redwell</i>)	Mr. Arthur Playfair.
DULCIE GRIMSTONE (<i>his daughter</i>)	Miss Phyllis Embury.

“ FIRST-NIGHT ” PROGRAMME.

MR. BLINKHORN, M.A., Oxon. (<i>Senior</i> <i>Assistant Master at Crichton</i> <i>House</i>)				Mr. Leveson Lane.
MR. TINKLER, B.A., Camb. (<i>Junior</i> <i>Assistant Master at Crichton</i> <i>House</i>)				Mr. Brian Egerton.
TIPPING	} (<i>Boys at Crichton</i> <i>House</i>)			Mr. W. Briscoe-Owen.
CHAWNER				Master Bobbie
				Andrews.
JOLLAND				Master Philip Tonge.
BIDDLECOMB				Master Joseph Victor.
COKER				Master F. Thorndike.
COGGS				Master Jack Hobbs.
KIFFIN				Master Sidney Sher-
				wood.
CECILY	} (<i>Small friends of Barbara's</i>)			Miss Marjorie Dane.
PETER				Master Burford
				Hampden.
THEIR NURSE	..	..	..	Miss Lilian Brennard.
BOALER (<i>Butler</i>)	} (<i>At 170, West-</i> <i>bourne Terrace</i>)			Mr. Clifford Brooke.
RHODA (<i>Parlour-</i> <i>maid</i>)				Miss May Taverner.
ELLEN (<i>House-</i> <i>maid</i>)				Miss Jean Bloomfield.

VICE VERSA.

A FARCICAL FANTASTIC PLAY IN THREE ACTS.

THE FIRST ACT.

SCENE 1.—*The Library at MR. PAUL BULTITUDE'S house, 170, Westbourne Terrace.*

It is a sombre room, handsomely but heavily furnished. Halfway up on the right is a black marble mantelpiece with a big black marble clock and bronze ornaments, behind them a long low mirror. In front of the fireplace is a Club-fender with brass rails and a dull green leather top. Right and left of the fireplace are electric lights. Above the fireplace, at a slight angle, is a mahogany door leading to the dining-room. On the left of this door is a big green leather sofa, and above that a hanging mahogany bookcase with brass latticed front. On the walls, which are distempered Pompeian red, hang some grimy Old Masters of the mid-seventeenth century Italian school in dingy gilded frames. At the back, on the extreme left, is another mahogany door which, when opened, gives a glimpse of the entrance-hall, with another door immediately

opposite. Halfway up on the left is a large bay-window, which is screened by heavy green curtains; in front of this window, a pedestal writing-table. Almost in the centre of the room is a massive table. At the right end of the table, nearest to the fire, is a big green leather arm-chair. There are Chippendale dining-room chairs by the window and doors, and a writing chair at the left end of the table. Between the door to the hall and the bookcase, and between that and the sofa, are electroliers. The switches are on the left, below the fireplace.

Time, an evening in late January, about six o'clock.

As the curtain rises the room is lit only by the firelight. BOALER, a highly respectable butler, in morning-coat and waistcoat, black tie and dark grey trousers, enters by the door on the left, crosses to the fireplace, and switches on the electric lights, after which he attends to the fire. BARBARA BULTITUDE, a pretty girl of about fourteen, simply dressed, with her hair tied at the back with a broad bow, enters from the dining-room on the right.

BARBARA.

Oh, Boaler.

BOALER.

[*By the Club-fender.*] Yes, Miss Barbara.

BARBARA.

D'you know where Master Dick is ?

BOALER.

Last time *I* see him, Miss, he was down in the kitchen. Saying good-bye to Cook.

BARBARA.

Did he seem *very* downhearted ?

BOALER.

[*Conscientiously.*] No, Miss. I shouldn't say so. Not particklar down'arted. He was eatin' dough-nuts.

BARBARA.

[*With a sigh.*] Poor Dick ! It is a pity the holidays are really over ! I *shall* miss him so.

BOALER.

[*Sympathetically.*] We shall all of us do *that*, Miss. 'Igh-spirited young gentleman, Mister Dick. When he's *himself* !

BARBARA.

Ah ! When did Father say you were to call the cab, Boaler ?

BOALER.

Quarter before seven, Miss.

BARBARA.

[*Looking at the clock.*] Father's later than usual

this evening. He *said* he would be home before Dick started.

BOALER.

[*As he goes towards the door on the left.*] He'll be back in plenty o' time for *that*, Miss. Over 'alf an hour yet, Miss.

BARBARA.

Well, if you *should* come across Dick, just tell him *I'm* here, will you?

BOALER.

[*At the door.*] I will, Miss. He'll *want* a bit o' cheerin' up before he has to say good-bye to his Pa. [*He goes out.*]

BARBARA.

[*Half to BOALER, half to herself, as she comes to the corner of the fender.*] Oh, I hope he won't break down!

[DICK BULTITUDE *enters from the door up on the left; he is a stolid boy of about fifteen; he wears an Eton jacket and collar, black tie and grey trousers, and is munching the remains of a dough-nut.*]

DICK.

[*Dismally.*] Hullo, Barbara! You in here?
[*He drifts aimlessly about the room.*]

BARBARA.

So you've finished saying good-bye to Cook?

DICK.

Yes. *That's* over. Not a bad sort, Cook—talks a lot of drivel, though.

BARBARA.

What sort of drivel?

DICK.

[*In an aggrieved tone.*] Said: "Time flew so fast nowadays, she'd see me home for the Easter hols before she could turn round!" Time'll have to be a flier to get through eleven weeks as fast as that, I can tell her! [*He seats himself in the green leather arm-chair.*]

BARBARA.

Is it really eleven weeks? . . . I say, would you rather I turned off the lights?

DICK.

What for?

BARBARA.

Oh, I don't know—I only thought you *might*, perhaps.

DICK.

Thought I wanted to blub? Not me! Not yet, anyhow. Still, you can turn 'em out if you *want* to, you know.

BARBARA.

[*After switching off the lights and seating herself*

on the Club-fender.] It's cosier like this, isn't it? Oh, Dick, I *do* wish the holidays could go on for ever, don't you?

DICK.

What's the good of wishing rot like that?

BARBARA.

After all, you *did* get an extra week, Dick.

DICK.

It didn't *seem* a week—or anything like it!

BARBARA.

I know. Still, you *have* had a good time this Christmas, even though Father *wouldn't* take us to the pantomime.

DICK.

I'd almost rather I *hadn't* had a good time now. Make it easier going back!

BARBARA.

Do you hate going back so *very* much?

DICK.

[Rising and sitting on edge of table.] Shouldn't mind if I wasn't in for such a rocky time of it. . . . I say, Barbara, d'you think Dad'll run to half a sov. for a tip this time? I shall be jolly well up a tree if he *don't*!

BARBARA.

Oh! And I've spent all *my* allowance! But *why* will you be up a tree?

DICK.

[*Gloomily.*] Got to stump up five bob to Coggs and Coker, first go-off. They gave it me to get 'em those rabbits and mice—*you* know—that Dad made me get rid of.

BARBARA.

Just because you kept them in your room; and they weren't so *very* unpleasant either. But poor Father—well, he doesn't understand *some* things!

DICK.

He don't understand *me*. Expect he'll give me the usual jawing—only hotter. *I* don't care! It's going to be a beastly half anyhow—all round!

BARBARA.

[*Leaving the fender and going towards the arm-chair.*] There's *one* thing, Dick, you'll have lots of tuck this time, Cook's seen to that. Jam, cake, sweets—all sorts of things. Who cares for Doctor Grimstone and his silly old rules?

DICK.

[*Swinging his legs.*] Sure *I* don't. But Dad would kick up a row if he heard of it.

BARBARA.

Dad won't be there when you open your box.

DICK.

No. More will Grim, if *I* know it! But, after all, Barbara, you know [*disconsolately*], tuck isn't *everything*!

BARBARA.

But there'll be Dulcie, Dick! You said you and Dulcie were such pals. I *should* like to see her. Is she pretty?

DICK.

Oh, Dulcie's all right enough. Unless—unless anything comes out about the other girl.

BARBARA.

The other? Dick! you never told me there was *another*! *Why* didn't you?

DICK.

Don't know. Nothing much to tell. Connie Davenant, *her* name is; her people live next door to Grimstone's. And, one day last half, I was out in the playground by myself, up at the top of the pole by the trapezes, and—— [*He pauses.*]

BARBARA.

Well?

DICK.

She was in the garden on the other side of the

wall. And she sang out to me, and we got talking. She asked what my name was, and I told her. And I asked what *her* name was, and she told me. And after that—— [*He stops again.*]

BARBARA.

Yes, after *that*?

DICK.

She began chucking letters to me over the wall.

BARBARA.

Horrid girl! But, of course, you never *answered* them!

DICK.

'Course I didn't. Except—except *once*—when I thought Dulcie was favouring Tipping. But Connie never got my letter, because I lost it. I was in no end of a funk lest old Grim might get hold of it. Luckily, he didn't. Still, if Connie should start writing again—— Oh, Barbara, it's beastly going back! I shan't be able to keep out of rows—I *know* I shan't. [*The front-door bell rings, and he rises nervously.*] There's Dad! I—I say—think I'd better clear out?

BARBARA.

No, I should stay. Father *may* be in quite a good temper.

DICK.

Well, you stick by me, that's all !

PARADINE'S VOICE.

[*In the hall outside.*] Not in yet, eh ? It's of no consequence. I'll wait for him. [BOALER enters from hall.]

BOALER.

[*After turning on the lights on either side of the bookcase.*] Mr. Paradine, Miss, to see Mr. Bultitude.

[MARMADUKE PARADINE enters ; he is about thirty-five, dark, clean-shaven, and has an ingratiating manner. He carries a single eye-glass, and his clothes, though distinctly shabby, are well-cut.]

PARADINE.

[*As BARBARA comes forward to meet him.*] Ha ! Unless I'm very much mistaken, you're my little niece—er—Pauline ?

BARBARA.

No, I'm Barbara.

PARADINE.

Barbara ? To be sure you are !

BARBARA.

And this is Dick.

PARADINE.

And that's Dick, eh? I should have known you both anywhere. But I daresay you haven't the faintest idea who *I* am?

BARBARA.

No, we haven't. *Ought* we to?

PARADINE.

Perhaps not. You were such little kiddies when I went out to India. Still, you may have heard your Papa mention your poor dear Mamma's only brother, Marmaduke?

BARBARA.

I've heard *Mother* mention you, but not Father.

PARADINE.

H'm! Not Father.

BARBARA.

And are you really Uncle Duke?

PARADINE.

Yes, my dear, that's who *I* am. So you're glad to see me, eh? [*After kissing BARBARA and shaking hands with DICK, he takes the green leather arm-chair.*] I've had a hard life of it out there—a very hard life. And, as soon as I got back to the dear old country again [*with sentiment*], my first thought was to go and see whether

my sister's children still remembered their poor Uncle. And so I came.

BARBARA.

[*Dubiously.*] Does *Father* know you've come back yet, Uncle Duke?

PARADINE.

Not yet. Thought I'd give him a surprise—a *pleasant* surprise, I hope. A—is he at all likely to be in *soon*?

BARBARA.

He won't be long, because he said he'd be back in time to see Dick before he goes back to School.

PARADINE.

Going back to School, are you, Dick? Poor chap! Hard lines, eh? At least, I know *I* used to loathe going back to School myself. And I went back to *several* of 'em, too! About when do you think your Father will come in?

BARBARA.

Not later than half-past six.

PARADINE.

And it's now—is that clock right? [*Looks at clock on mantelpiece, while pulling out his watch-chain, to the end of which, in place of a watch, is attached a small green stone tablet.*]

DICK.

I say ! you *have* got a rum watch !

PARADINE.

[*Slightly disconcerted.*] I forgot for the moment that I'd left my watch at home. *This* isn't a watch, my boy. It's a stone I got from a scoundrelly fakir out in India. I did the old rascal a good turn, and he insisted on my taking this as a keepsake. Came across it the other day at the bottom of one of my trunks.

DICK.

[*Interested.*] What's it for ?

PARADINE.

Couldn't tell you, old chap. He spun me a yarn about its being a talisman of sorts.

DICK.

A talisman ? Will it cure people, like the one in "*Ivanhoe*" ?

PARADINE.

I daresay. But my friend's story was that it's a wishing-stone, and has the power of granting one wish—and only one—to any one who holds it, and utters his wish aloud.

DICK.

And *has* it ? Have you tried ?

PARADINE.

Not I, my boy!

DICK.

Oh, but why *haven't* you?

PARADINE.

Well, for one thing, I'm no longer young and innocent enough to put my trust in talismans. For another, I've the best reasons for knowing that anything old Ram Dass said was extremely likely to be a lie. [*Replacing stone in his pocket.*]

DICK.

It's a jolly neat thing, anyway! [*The front door is heard to slam.*] I shouldn't half mind having it. I say! Some one's just come in; I expect it's Dad at last.

PARADINE.

[*Going to hearthrug.*] Ah. Well, I hope he'll have a hearty welcome for the returned wanderer. I hope so. [*MR. PAUL BULTITUDE enters. He is a portly man of about fifty-four, with rather scanty grizzled auburn hair around a bald head, clean-shaven chin and upper lip. He wears a frock-coat and dark trousers. PARADINE rises to greet him.*] Paul! my dear old chap! How are you? Delightful to meet you after all these years—and hardly altered a bit! [*BARBARA and DICK cross to pedestal writing-table on left.*].

MR. BULTITUDE.

[*Without taking* PARADINE'S *outstretched hand.*] I am not aware of having altered at all. [*With marked coldness.*] I must say I am rather surprised at this visit—considering that, when we last met, I distinctly told you—— [*He crosses to fireplace.*]

PARADINE.

Now, my dear Paul! Why go back to the past? Forget it, as *I* have! These children of yours have received me most cordially. Surely, *surely* you will not allow them to outdo you in hospitality?

MR. BULTITUDE.

I suppose, as usual, you have come here for something?

PARADINE.

Well—er—in point of fact, there *was* a little matter of business I was anxious to put to you; but I'm afraid I've chosen rather an inconvenient time?

MR. BULTITUDE.

No more inconvenient than any *other* time.

PARADINE.

Thank you, Paul. That's kind—that's really kind! [*Sits himself comfortably in chair on left of table.*] I meant that I gather you are just

about to say good-bye to my young friend here before he goes back to School. I should be reluctant indeed to intrude upon so painful a scene as a parting between Father and Son.

MR. BULTITUDE.

I have not *observed* any reluctance to do so at present.

PARADINE.

I will wait, my dear Paul—wait until you are more at leisure.

MR. BULTITUDE.

As you please ; but I doubt if you will find it worth your while.

PARADINE.

Perhaps not. Still, I trust that, when the strain is over, I may find you in a softer mood. [*Rising.*] Meanwhile, perhaps Barbara will be kind enough to take me up to the drawing-room. [*To BARBARA.*] I have spent many a happy hour there, my dear, in the good old days that are gone for ever, listening while your Mother played for me. I should like to hear the dear old piano once more. Sentimental, I daresay, but human !

BARBARA.

[*To MR. BULTITUDE.*] May I take Uncle Duke up to the drawing-room, Father ?

MR. BULTITUDE.

Oh, if you like. You had better say good-bye to your brother before you go.

BARBARA.

[*Hugging DICK tearfully.*] Then—good-bye, dear darling Dick! [PAR. *stands apart and takes out the magic stone from his pocket.*]

DICK.

[*Kissing her.*] G—good-bye, Barbara. . . . I say, *don't*—or you'll set *me* off!

PARADINE.

[*To DICK.*] Good-bye, old fellow. Sorry I'm too broke to tip you as a well-regulated Uncle should. But you seemed to take a fancy to this [*detaching the stone from the end of his watch-chain*], so keep it as a remembrance.

DICK.

[*As he takes the stone.*] Thanks awf'ly, Uncle! Good-bye.

BARBARA.

[*At the door up on the right.*] We can go up this way, Uncle, through the dining-room.

PARADINE.

[*As he goes up.*] I remember, my dear, *I* remember. I *used* to know my way about this house pretty well, *once*! [*He follows BARBARA out.*]

MR. BULTITUDE.

[*Taking the green leather chair.*] I wish he knew the way out of it! What's that thing he's given you?

DICK.

This? Oh, nothing. Only a stone he got in India.

MR. BULTITUDE.

I can't allow you to accept any present—however trifling—from a relation who (it's just as well you should know) has never been anything but a disgrace to the family. Give it to me.

DICK.

[*Hesitating.*] Uncle says it's supposed to be a sort of talisman. Mayn't I keep it?

MR. BULTITUDE.

Certainly not. [DICK *reluctantly gives him the stone.*] I shall return this trumpery to your Uncle, after you have left. [He puts the stone down on the table on his right.] Before you do leave, I have to speak to you seriously—[DICK *seats himself on the Club-fender, brings out a jujube from a paper packet, and puts it in his mouth*—very seriously indeed.

DICK.

[*Ruefully.*] Yes, Dad,—I know. [*A pause; his emotion finds vent in repressed sniffing.*]

MR. BULTITUDE.

[*Sharply.*] Don't sniff like that, sir! And, good gad, what have you got in your mouth? You're sucking peppermint again,—which I've told you times without number I will *not* permit in my presence. Get rid of it.

DICK.

It isn't peppermint—only a delectable jujube. And I got it at a chemist's!

MR. BULTITUDE.

I don't care *where* you got it—put it in the fire! [DICK removes the jujube and throws it into the fire.] You've made me forget what I was going to say now. . . . Ah, I remember. Yes—h'm—I have received a most unsatisfactory report of you from Dr. Grimstone this Christmas,—he tells me that you have considerable natural capacity and excellent abilities, but are deplorably idle and frivolous. What have you to say to *that*?

DICK.

I do try all I know to keep out of rows—but—but I can't help it, somehow.

MR. BULTITUDE.

"Can't help it"—you *must* help it! Here am I, furnishing you with considerable natural capacity, excellent abilities, and—and every other school requisite—and all you do is to misuse them! I

may as well tell you that I have written to Dr. Grimstone in reply, strongly urging him, should he have the smallest occasion to find fault with you this term, not to hesitate to employ the rod.

DICK.

I say! [*drumming nervously with his heels against the brass fender rails.*] You—you needn't have said *that*, Dad!

MR. BULTITUDE.

[*Irritably.*] Keep those heels still!—unless you want to kick all the lacquer off that fender! Why the dooce you can't sit in a chair like an ordinary human being, I don't know!

DICK.

[*Meekly.*] Have you *done* yet, Dad?

MR. BULTITUDE.

I had a good deal more to say—but it would evidently be only wasting words on you.

DICK.

Then—would you mind letting me have some pocket-money to go back with, please?

MR. BULTITUDE.

Pocket-money? You can't want *money*! Why, your Grandmother gave you a sovereign at Christmas, and I gave you a new florin myself!

DICK.

That's all gone long ago. And you always *do* tip me going back, you know.

MR. BULTITUDE.

If I *do* give you money, you'll only go and spend it.

DICK.

Isn't that what money's *for*? Besides, there's the cab fare, and the railway ticket.

MR. BULTITUDE.

Boaler is going to King's Cross with you and will pay your cab and railway fares—as you know very well. Which reminds me, he ought to have called the cab by now. You'd better go and get your coat and hat.

DICK.

But won't you give me my pocket-money first?

MR. BULTITUDE.

I suppose I must! [*He brings out a handful of loose gold and silver from his trouser pocket, and spreads it on the table.*]

DICK.

[*Leaving the fender and approaching the table.*]
I say! What lots!

MR. BULTITUDE.

Selecting five shillings and pushing them towards DICK.] There—one, two, three, four,—five shillings.

DICK.

[*Dismally, as he pockets them.*] Thank you, Dad.

MR. BULTITUDE.

A very liberal allowance for a boy of your age. If you should want more, later on, and write a legible letter to ask for it, and I consider it proper to let you have it, why—er—you'll *get* it, you know.

DICK.

Thanks awf'ly. And—and couldn't you let me keep Uncle's talisman, after all?

MR. BULTITUDE.

What, *this* thing? [*seizing the stone from the table.*] I've already told you that I shall not. Now, is there anything *else* you have to say to me?

DICK.

Only—only this. Won't you—won't you let me leave Grimstone's at the end of this half?

MR. BULTITUDE.

Let you leave Dr. Grimstone's! Oblige me by giving him his proper title when you speak of

him. No. Why should I take you away? It's an excellent School, every care taken of you, and all the comforts, and even the luxuries of home—including meat for breakfast. I should like to know what *more* you want.

DICK.

Biddlecomb's major has gone to Harrow, and Biddlecomb and Jolland, too, are going soon. They're two of the chaps at Grim's—Dr. Grimstone's, I *mean*. Mightn't I go, too? I do *hate* Crichton House. The Doctor is decent enough to fellows he likes—but he's got a down on *Me*. And some of the chaps *are* such beasts—and altogether it's beastly! *Do* let me leave!

MR. BULTITUDE.

Nonsense, nonsense. I don't approve of public schools—even if I could afford to send you to one.

DICK.

Then mayn't I stop at home and have a tutor?

MR. BULTITUDE.

No, you may not. [DICK *returns to the fender, seats himself upon it and cries softly.*] You will remain at Crichton House as long as I see fit to keep you there, so there's an end of it. Now, now; there's nothing to *cry* about. I know it's the usual thing for boys at school to fancy themselves extremely ill-used, for all the world as if people in my position had their sons educated out

of *spite* ! But—mark my words—when a boy grows up and goes out into the world and has *real* trials and troubles to face, he looks back to his schooldays as the happiest time of his life !

DICK.

[*Through his tears.*] I hope they w—wont be the happiest time in *my* life, that's all ! And you may have been happy enough at the School *you* went to, but I bet you wouldn't care about changing places now and going to Grimstone's instead of me !

MR. BULTITUDE.

You think not ? You're wrong, Dick, you're wrong ! [*impressively as he still holds the stone in his right hand.*] I tell you, my boy, I wish—yes, I only wish I *could* change places with you and be a boy once more ! [*As he speaks there is a growing rumble, like the passing of a heavy van ; the electric lights flicker out for an instant. There is still, to all appearances, a boy sitting on the fender and an elderly man in the big arm-chair, but their respective souls have exchanged bodies.*]

PAUL.

[*Seemingly unconscious at first that he is seated on the Club-fender.*] Another of those confounded motor-vans ! Considering the rates I pay, these electric lights are simply disgraceful ! I must write and complain to the company. [*He becomes conscious that he is sitting on the fender.*] Why, why,

how do I come to be *here*—I thought I was sitting in—— [*He looks round, and sees DICK in the arm-chair, almost doubled up with hysterical laughter*]. What's this? What's this? [*starting as he discovers himself on the fender*]. Who the dooce are *you*? Is it possible that—that the thing I see in that chair can be my own double?

DICK.

[*Faintly.*] Oh, haven't you found out yet? Look at yourself in the glass—it'll make you roar.

PAUL.

Eh, what? [*He springs up, and, finding that he can't see himself in the mirror over the mantelpiece, stands on the top of the fender.*] Good Heavens! It can't be! [*He searches and brings up with disgust a very dubious pocket-handkerchief, with which he rubs the mirror frantically*]. I—I certainly seem to have altered—do you notice it? [*DICK cackles helplessly*]. There's nothing to giggle about, sir [*descending from Club-fender and facing him*], so have you!

DICK.

[*Leaving his chair and going to mantelpiece and examining himself in the mirror. Why, so I have!* [*Turning to PAUL*]. I say, Dad! I'm you, and you're me! What a lark?

PAUL.

A lark! How—how has this horrible change come over us?

DICK.

I don't know. [*Suddenly.*] Why, of course! Uncle Duke's stone! I've got it in my hand still. *That's* done it!

PAUL.

Done it? How do you mean—*done* it?

DICK.

Don't you see? You wished we could change places with one another. And we jolly well *have*!

PAUL.

But I never *meant* it—never!

DICK.

[*As he seats himself on the corner of the table and swings his legs.*] Ah, you couldn't expect a talisman to know *that*.

PAUL.

[*Still bewildered.*] A talisman—*what* talisman?

DICK.

Why, I *told* you. Uncle Duke said it was supposed to be a wishing-stone. And it *is*, too!

PAUL.

A wishing-stone. [*Imperiously.*] Give it to me. [DICK rises and hands him the stone with mechanical obedience.] I—ah—wish this ridiculous

mistake to be put right at once! [*He stops, and looks down himself hopefully, perceives no change, and resumes.*] I wish my son and I were in our own bodies again! [*After a second disappointment.*] I say, I wish——

DICK.

[*Who is watching him with interest from his seat on the table.*] You don't seem to be getting on, Dad!

PAUL.

Why,—don't you see any change beginning yet?

DICK.

No. The talisman won't work for nuts. Oh, I remember! Uncle Duke said——

PAUL.

[*Impatiently.*] Don't quote your Uncle Marmaduke to me, Sir! What the dickens does *he* know about it?

DICK.

He said the stone was supposed only to give you *one* wish. And you've *had* yours, you know!

PAUL.

[*With a groan.*] It's terrible—terrible! I must do *something*. We can't possibly remain as we *are*—Boaler might come in at any moment!

DICK.

He *would* be surprised, wouldn't he? I say.
[*Leaving the table, and approaching the fireplace.*]
Let's have them *all* up!

PAUL.

[*In horror.*] Touch that bell if you dare, Sir!
Can't you realise how *serious* this is? . . . Ah,
I've an idea—an idea which will save us both!

DICK.

Then let's *have it*, Dad!

PAUL.

It seems to me highly probable that, if *you* expressed a wish, it would be granted. Take this—this infernal thing [*giving DICK the stone*] and wish us both out of this fix.

DICK.

[*Standing on the hearth-rug.*] And then you would send me off to Grim—Dr. Grimstone's—again? [*Piano upstairs is heard playing "Home, Sweet Home," softly.*]

PAUL.

Of course, of course! Don't waste precious time with foolish questions. Wish, boy, wish!

DICK.

[*Sullenly.*] Don't see much fun in wishing for something I don't want.

PAUL.

You would hardly care to go back to School as you *are*.

DICK.

I shouldn't care for it at all!

PAUL.

Well, I shall certainly send you back to Crichton House in *any* case.

DICK.

What? Like I am? As if old Grim would *have* me!

PAUL.

If you're going to be obstinate, give me back that stone again.

DICK.

I shan't—it's mine! Uncle Duke gave it to *me*—not *you*!

PAUL.

[*Making a movement towards him threateningly.*] Then, Sir, you will compel me to use *force*!

DICK.

[*Putting the stone into his pocket, and guarding himself.*] You'd better not try it on! I bar hitting any fellow who isn't my own size—especially when he's my Father,—but if you

don't keep off, I shall *have* to punch your head!
[*The piano stops.*]

PAUL.

[*Half choked with rage.*] You—you unnatural boy!

DICK.

Unnatural boy yourself! [PAUL *retreats a step or two as DICK remains on the hearth-rug. BOALER enters from the hall with DICK's hat and coat.*]

PAUL.

Ah, thank Heaven, here's Boaler!

BOALER.

[*To DICK.*] I've got a cab, Sir, and Master Dick's luggage is all on. And I've brought his coat and hat.

DICK.

Right-oh, Boaler! [BOALER *stares.*] I mean, very good. [*To PAUL.*] Come—er—my boy. Time you were off! [*The piano is now playing waltz refrain: "You do not love me? No? Bid me good-bye and go."*]

PAUL.

[*Recovering from his momentary stupefaction, and sitting in green arm-chair.*] Nonsense, Sir! I've no intention of going to this confounded School of yours—none whatever. [BOALER *smiles.*]

DICK.

Why, you said yourself it was an excellent School, with every luxury, and all the comforts of home! And you're going back to the happiest time of your life. So you're nothing to grumble at.

PAUL.

[*Ignoring Dick.*] Boaler, send that cab away. Something has happened, which — which I'll explain later. But I'm not going to leave this house.

BOALER.

[*With a broad grin.*] Lor, Master Dick, how you do go on! But you've got to do what you're told now, so put your 'at and coat on [*offering coat*] like a sensible young gentleman.

PAUL.

[*Passionately.*] I will not. It's monstrous, I tell you, monstrous!

DICK.

[*He has brought out the stone again to look at, and now has it in his hand.*] I wish you'd go back to School without any more of this fuss. [*There is a momentary rumble as before, and the electric lights flicker for a time.*] I say! I've gone and used up my wish now!

BOALER.

Lights seem to have gone wrong again, Sir.

DICK.

[*With gravity.*] Yes—er—I must write and complain to the company about it. [*To PAUL.*] Well, my boy, are you going back quietly?

PAUL.

[*Submitting to be helped into his coat by BOALER*] I *must*, Sir! I can't help myself, now you've *wished* it. . . . But mark my words, Sir, mark my words—directly I *get* there, I shall at once inform Dr. Grimstone of the infamous manner in which I've been treated, and he will enable me to come back by the next train! [*He goes towards door to hall; the piano stops*].

DICK.

I daresay—if he *believes* you! [*BOALER goes to the door and holds it open*].

PAUL.

[*At the door.*] Believes me? He *must* believe me! My behaviour, Sir, my story, my mere manner of expressing myself, will soon convince him that I am very different from the boy I seem!

DICK.

Well, you *try* it. Good-bye, my boy, and mind you keep out of mischief *this* half.

PAUL.

[*Inarticulate with rage, as he goes to the door.*] Pah! [*He goes out, BOALER closes the door after*

him ; a pause. DICK crosses quickly to the window, partly draws the curtains, and looks out ; the hall door is heard to shut ; there is a sound of departing wheels. DICK comes down to the centre of the room, as the piano above breaks into a lively tune.]

DICK.

[*To himself.*] Shouldn't care to take on Dad's job! [*Exultantly.*] I'm all right now! No School! No lessons! Stop at home as long as ever I like! It's ripping—ripping! [*The piano plays a polka, to which he is dancing wildly as PARADINE enters from the dining-room and stands amazed.*]

PARADINE.

[*As DICK perceives him and stops dancing in some confusion.*] I—I gather from this display of emotion that my nephew has already departed.

DICK.

No,—I mean, yes. He's gone all right, Uncle Duke. I—I don't know why I was dancing like that.

PARADINE.

The reaction after the strain of parting—very natural, my dear Paul, very natural! [*The piano stops.*] Hem.—Your playfulness in addressing me as “Uncle” encourages the hope that you are in a rather more genial mood than I left you in—eh?

DICK.

[*Sitting on the table and giggling foolishly.*] I—I suppose I am—er—Duke, old fellow!

PARADINE.

The moment seems propitious for mentioning that I am in very low water just now, and if you *could*—er—see your way to tide me over by a small temporary advance——

DICK.

[*Thrusting his hand into his trouser-pocket and bringing up a handful of gold and silver, which he throws on the table.*] I've lots now. Help yourself. Will *this* be enough?

PARADINE.

My dear fellow, I won't deprive you of all that. [*Selecting the sovereigns and half-sovereigns, and pocketing them.*] The gold will do me! It's really very good of you, Paul, old chap, and if there's anything *I* can do for you in return, I do *hope* you'll mention it. [BARBARA *enters from dining-room.*]

DICK.

[*Eagerly, to PARADINE.*] I'll tell you what you *might* do—take me and Barbara to the 'pantomime to-night!

BARBARA.

[*Surprised.*] Oh, *Father*!

PARADINE.

[*Staring at him.*] "*Take you,*" eh? I should have thought you were old enough to take yourself.

DICK.

[*Recollecting himself.*] Of course! So I *am*—now. But you'll come too? And, I say—come and live with us altogether. *Will* you?

BARBARA.

Father! How *sweet* of you! You will, Uncle Duke, you *will* come and stay with us, won't you?

PARADINE.

[*Giving his right hand to DICK, and his left to BARBARA*] Well, as you both make such a point of it—I *will*.

DICK.

Hooray! We'll have the time of our lives!

PARADINE.

I shouldn't be at all surprised if we *do*!

[*The Interval Curtain falls, remaining down for as short a time as possible.*]

END OF THE FIRST SCENE.

THE SECOND SCENE.

A class-room at Crichton House School, Market Rodwell.

It is a large room furnished with modern school-desks, etc.

At the back are two high windows, uncurtained, with drawn blinds. On the right of the windows is a door opening on to the entrance hall. In an angle on the extreme left is a smaller door leading to DR. GRIMSTONE'S study. On the left is the fireplace; up on the wall above it is a big round clock, with the hands at five minutes past eight.

Below the fireplace is a glazed door leading to the playground. Down on the extreme right is a window with a practicable sash.

Between the two windows at the back is a table with books, etc., and a writing-chair.

On the left of this table, parallel with the windows, are two combined seats and desks, A and B, each to seat two boys; right and left of the table are two similar desks, C and D, each to seat four boys. Above the window on the right and against the wall are four more desks, E, F, G, and H, facing left.

On the wall, above DR. GRIMSTONE'S writing-chair, is a framed and illuminated motto, "The Child is Father to the Man."

The walls are distempered pale green, with a darker

green dado, and hung with—in addition to the above—some coloured educational German prints, photographs of School Cricket and Football teams, and more maps.

Between desks E, F and G, H on the right are a small table and chair for an assistant master. The room is lit by gas-brackets on either side of mantelpiece and on right wall.

[As the curtain rises, BIDDLECOMB, COKER, and COGGS, all in Eton jackets and grey trousers, are standing by the fireplace. JOLLAND is perched on desk G on right, absorbed in working out some calculations in pencil in a notebook. A very small boy, KIFFIN, in a black knickerbocker suit and large round spectacles, is sitting apart at desk C, reading a book. Other boys are grouped by desks A and B, and E and G, showing one another recently acquired treasures, larking, etc.]

JOLLAND.

[A cheery, impudent-looking boy of about fourteen, looking up from a notebook in which he has been making calculations.] I say, you chaps, I make it eleven weeks, three days, and thirteen hours—[looking at clock over mantelpiece]—no, twelve hours and fifty-five minutes, to the Easter hols.

BIDDLECOMB.

[A boy of the same age.] And we only get three weeks then! If this was a Public School, we'd have a month!

JOLLAND.

Yes, it's jolly sickening! This half is always the beastliest of the three!

BIDDLECOMB, COKER, AND COGGS [*together.*]

Rather! . . . By a long way! I do bar *this* half!

COGGS.

[*Sees KIFFIN at desk opposite absorbed in a book.*]
Hullo, you there with the saucy giglamps! What are you up to? [*Crossing to him.*] Beginning to swot *already*, are you?

KIFFIN.

[*Looking up.*] I'm *not* thwotting. I'm only thtudyng the ruleth of Cricket in my "Boys' Manual of Sports and Pathtimes."

COGGS.

Well, we don't play Cricket in January here, as a rule, so chuck it! [*Knocks the book out of K.'s hand on to the floor. K. picks it up.*] What's your name?

KIFFIN.

Thyril Auguthtus Algernon Winterbotham Kiffin.

COGGS.

Oh, is that *all*? [*K. nods.*] Then here's a smack for Thyril, and another for— [*He is about*

to give him another cuff as TIPPING enters from door on right.]

JOLLAND.

Hullo, Tipping!

OTHER BOYS.

Hullo, Tipping! That you? When did you come? [*etc.*].

COGGS.

[*Sheepishly, pausing in act of cuffing K.*]. How are you, Tipping? Had a good time?

TIPPING.

A better time than you seem to be giving that new kid, anyhow!

COGGS.

Why, I never hurt the little beggar!

TIPPING.

You've made him blub, anyhow! His first night, too! Just you let him alone, will you, or I shall have to give you a jolly good licking!

COGGS.

[*Sulkily.*] Oh, all right, I'll let him alone right enough. I know you can lick me and any fellow in the School—except *one*.

TIPPING.

Oh; and who's that?

COGGS.

Bultitude. He blacked your eye last half.

TIPPING.

Only by accident. I'd take *him* on any day.
And if he's coming back——

JOLLAND.

Oh, he's coming back all right. Any one know if Chawner is? He *said* he was leaving. But he says that every half!

TIPPING.

It's all right this time. He wrote to me in the hols and told me he wasn't coming back.

JOLLAND.

And a jolly good job, too! I can't stick that chap Chawner! [*General assent.*] Always finding out things you'd done and hinting he was afraid his conscience might make him report you to Grim.

TIPPING.

And his rotten conscience always *did*, too!

JOLLAND.

As soon as he'd got all he wanted out of you!

BIDDLECOMB.

[*Judicially.*] It's Grim I blame *most*—for encouraging it. They *don't* at *Public* Schools. Sneaks would get a rotten time *there*.

COKER.

If Chawner was coming back, I should vote for giving him a rotten time here.

COGGS.

Yes, send him to Coventry. [*General assent and cries of "Serve him right!" etc., as CHAWNER enters from the door on the right; he is a weedy, unwholesome-looking youth with a white face and a demure grin.*]

CHAWNER.

Well, you fellows?

TIPPING AND OTHERS.

[*Together, with a great show of cordiality.*] Why, Chawner, old chap! How are you? We—we thought you weren't coming back!

CHAWNER.

I *did* mean to leave—but I knew some of you chaps would get into trouble without me to look after you. [*DULCIE enters from the DOCTOR'S study door on the left; she is a pretty child of about fourteen, simply dressed in white.*]

ALL.

[*Crowding round her.*] Hullo, Dulcie!

DULCIE.

[*Shaking hands with everybody except CHAWNER,*

whom she chooses not to see.] How do you do? How do you do? I *do* hope you're not all awfully sorry to be back? Because *I'm* so *glad* you are!

SEVERAL BOYS.

Oh, we don't *mind* coming back—*much*! [*The boys break up into groups again, leaving TIPPING and DULCIE together.*]

TIPPING.

[*Bashfully.*] Are you glad to see *me* back, Dulcie?

DULCIE.

[*Carelessly.*] Oh yes. Of course I am.

TIPPING.

[*Jealousy.*] As glad as you will be to see *Bultitude* back?

DULCIE.

Bultitude hasn't come yet. [*Anxiously.*] Why hasn't he? [*JOLLAND, COKER, and COGGS approach, and hear the rest of the dialogue.*]

TIPPING.

[*With ostentatious indifference.*] Sure *I* don't know! Shouldn't care myself if *Bultitude* didn't come back at all!

DULCIE.

I daresay *you* wouldn't—others *would*, though!

[*She turns away and goes to KIFFIN, and tries to cheer him up in dumb show.*]

COKER.

I hope Bultitude's coming. He's *bringing* me something.

COGGS.

And me, too. I *should* be sold if he didn't turn up.

JOLLAND.

So do *I* hope he will. He and I have always been pals. Jolly decent chap, Bultitude.

DULCIE.

[*Leaving KIFFIN, and going to the study door.*]
I'll go and tell Papa you're all here. [*She goes into study.*]

TIPPING.

Can't see what she sees in that fellow Bultitude myself.

CHAWNER.

I could tell her something about him—if I chose.

JOLLAND.

So you could about *most* chaps, eh?

CHAWNER.

I could about the chap who carved a donkey's

head just under Grim's desk, Jolland, if you mean *that*. And about another chap, Tipping, who smoked cigarettes last half, and thought nobody saw. I could get both of 'em into a *beastly* row—if I *liked*.

TIPPING.

[*With an uneasy wriggle*]. I say! old *fellow*! You're *not* going to begin all that *already*?

CHAWNER.

Oh, so long as you treat me *decently*, you needn't be afraid. [*He joins another group of boys, and talks in dumb show to them.*]

JOLLAND.

[*To TIPPING.*] Why don't you promise him a licking?

TIPPING.

[*To JOLLAND.*] It wouldn't be any good. He'd only sneak the sooner! . . . I say, Dulcie *did* seem rather pleased to see us, eh?

JOLLAND.

I daresay. Though why you and Bultitude should be such asses about a kid like her——!

TIPPING.

Bultitude? If I catch him making up to her, he'd better look out! [*The door of the hall opens, and PAUL enters. On finding that the room is full he seems about to go back.*]

JOLLAND.

* [*Going towards him.*] Hooray! Here's Bultitude at last! How are *you*, old fellow?

SEVERAL OTHERS.

How are you, Bultitude? How are you, old chap? [etc., etc.]

TIPPING.

[*Lounging up.*] So you've got here, eh?

PAUL.

[*Shortly.*] Yes. I've got here.

JOLLAND.

[*Sympathetically.*] Got the hump? This is pretty beastly, isn't it?

PAUL.

[*Eyeing his surroundings with much disfavour.*] It is. Fortunately, I shall not be here long.

JOLLAND.

[*In dismay.*] What? You're not leaving? When?

PAUL.

I understand there is a train to King's Cross in about an hour. I propose to leave by *that*. [*General roar of laughter at what is supposed to be a humorous sally on DICK's part.*]

JOLLAND.

[*As the laughter subsides.*] Oh, I say, what a fellow you are! Beginning humbugging the minute you've come!

PAUL.

I am perfectly serious, my boy. But I can't expect *you* to understand how I am situated. [*Renewed laughter.*]

TIPPING.

Clever ass! You may think you're jolly funny, but I don't see the joke myself.

JOLLAND.

You never *do*, you duffer! It's top-hole! Go on, Dick, don't mind *him*!

PAUL.

Perhaps one of you lads would let Dr. Grimstone know that Mr. Bultitude is here and would be glad to see him. [*Howls of laughter from all except TIPPING and KIFFIN.*]

DULCIE.

[*Coming out from study.*] Papa is just coming. [*Seeing PAUL.*] Oh, it's Bultitude! How do you do?

PAUL.

[*Giving her two fingers with condescension.*]

How are *you*, my dear? Dr. Grimstone's little girl, I think? [*Another roar of laughter.*]

DULCIE.

[*Surprised and hurt.*] Dick! [*To the others.*]
What *is* the matter with you?

JOLLAND.

It's all *right*, Dulcie. He's only rotting!

PAUL.

If you would kindly inform your Papa, my dear, that I wish to speak to him in private.

[*General mirth, which suddenly dies away as DR. GRIMSTONE enters from his study. He is a tall, stout person of about fifty, with black hair, heavy black eyebrows, clean-shaven upper lip, and a black beard coming up to the line of his lower lip, and touched with grey over the chin. He looks round the room, without severity. DULCIE slips up to the study door, and stands there.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Boys! Boys! What is all the noise about?

CHAWNER.

It was only Bultitude, Sir. He *has* been making us laugh so!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Urbanely.*] Well, well, some ebullition of

high spirits on returning to School is pardonable—very pardonable. But a little more moderation in *future*, Bultitude! [*Coming down.*] And how are you all? Tipping! Biddlecomb I *have* seen. Jolland, *you're* looking well. Coker! Coggs! All of you come back, I hope, braced in body and mind by your vacation? Ha, Kiffin, my boy, feeling at home with your new companions already, eh? That's right—that's right! [*DULCIE goes out*; DR. GRIMSTONE *stands by the fireplace on the left.*]

PAUL.

Excuse me, Dr. Grimstone, but did I hear you mention the name of Kiffin? Not the son of Jordan Kiffin of College Hill, by any chance? [*Suppressed mirth from several boys.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

And if he *is*, Bultitude, how does it concern *you*?

PAUL.

Merely because, if so, this little fellow's father is an old friend of mine, a *very* old friend. [*He looks round angrily as he hears more suppressed giggling.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Taken aback for the moment.*] Indeed? And how did you leave your *own* excellent Father, Bultitude? Well, I hope?

PAUL.

My *Father!* . . . Why, he's—the—the fact is, Dr. Grimstone, I can hardly answer that question without going into—er—family matters that are too delicate to be discussed in public.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*With a gasp of surprise.*] Ha! I gather from his letter that he had been much pained by your conduct. You little realise the distress of mind which a wilful son may cause an affectionate parent!

PAUL.

Pardon me—I do indeed.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Drily.*] I shall be glad to see some *proofs* of it. [*To the School generally.*] Well, boys, you have had an unusually protracted vacation this Christmas, owing to the severe weather.—I intend to reduce the Easter holidays a week by way of compensation. [*General but subdued dismay.*]

PAUL.

I'm uncommonly glad to hear it, Dr. Grimstone! Boys have far too long holidays as it *is!* I can assure you it's no joke having a great idle boy loafing about the home eating his empty head off! [*Sensation and more suppressed mirth.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Your sentiments, if sincere—[*He turns and*

catches BIDD., JOLL., COKER, and COGGS in convulsions; *they instantly become unnaturally solemn.*] I repeat, *if sincere*, Bultitude,—are highly creditable. [*To the others, more genially.*] And how have you all been employing the vacation, eh? [*Silence; no one finding courage to answer.*] In healthy out-door sports, I presume, in social pleasures, varied, perhaps, by an occasional visit to the circus or theatre? I took my daughter up the other day to a *matinée* performance of "Peter Pan"—she was—er—exceedingly entertained. No doubt some among you have seen it?

BOYS.

Yes, Sir. . . . I have, Sir. I've been five times, Sir!

PAUL.

I may be old-fashioned, Dr. Grimstone, very likely I *am*,—but I decidedly disapprove of taking children to dramatic exhibitions of *any* kind. It only *unsettles* them.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Glaring at him.*] I *hope* I am not doing you an injustice, Bultitude, but I have a strong impression that you are endeavouring to ape the sentiments of your seniors.

PAUL.

[*Earnestly.*] Upon my honour, Sir, I *am* doing

nothing of the kind! And if you will only permit me to explain——

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Mollified.*] I accept your assurance, Bultitude, there is no occasion to say any more about it. [*To the School.*] I daresay you are hungry after your journeys—if so, you will find supper laid out for you in the dining-hall.

ALL THE BOYS (EXCEPT PAUL).

[*Without enthusiasm.*] Thank you, Sir. [*They file out by the door leading to the entrance hall, JOLLAND lingering to the last.*]

JOLLAND.

[*In an undertone as he passes PAUL.*] It's ripping, old man! Keep it up! [*He goes out, leaving PAUL alone with the DOCTOR, who has moved towards his study door.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*By the study door, benevolently to PAUL.*] You had better go and have some supper, Bultitude, my boy.

PAUL.

[*Moving up to the writing-table.*] You are very good, Dr. Grimstone, I have had to come away without any dinner—but I can't say I feel much appetite. Still, if you *could* give me just a—a cutlet and a glass of claret, I might——

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Suddenly growing stern.*] Your worthy Father, Sir, has more than once complained of your greed and self-indulgence! You will be content with the same fare as your schoolfellows—cocoa and bread and butter. [*He goes into his study.*]

PAUL.

[*To himself, as he staggers to the writing-chair and sinks down in it.*] Cocoa and bread and butter! I shall want more support than *that* if I'm ever to find courage to—to beard him again! [*DULCIE comes in from the door on the right, looks round, and sees PAUL.*]

DULCIE.

Dick! Why, you're sitting in Papa's chair! I—I *wouldn't*, Dick!

PAUL.

You think he would object?

DULCIE.

If he *caught* you there. Don't you remember? he *caned* a boy for it once!

PAUL.

[*Hastily getting out of the chair.*] Caned! Great Heavens! [*Coming down to DULCIE.*] D'you know, my dear, I'm *afraid* I must be running away.

DULCIE.

Running away?

PAUL.

Yes. I don't think, after all, that I can wait to—to explain things to your Papa. I really ought to be getting home at once. I don't know what may be going on in my absence. So if you will make my apologies to Dr. Grimstone, and say that I was compelled to return to town on important business—

DULCIE.

Oh, Dick! You *might* be serious *now*.

PAUL.

Serious? I'm *deadly* serious. I must be off at once. Let me see—[*taking out coins*—four shillings will be more than enough for my fare to King's Cross.

DULCIE.

[*Half crying.*] D—do you want to leave me already? When you asked me to be your sweetheart last half and I said I would!

PAUL.

Tut-tut! Sweethearts! Little girls like you are too young for such nonsense.

DULCIE.

You didn't think so *once*!

PAUL.

It's all a mistake, my dear, all a mistake. I can't stop to explain, but I'm not the Dick *you* knew!

DULCIE.

I know you aren't. [*Clinging to him and sobbing.*] But you *will* be—*promise* me you will be!

PAUL.

[*As he tries to detach her arms.*] For goodness' sake don't do that! You—you'll *compromise* me, you know! If your Father was to come in——! [*TIPPING enters from the hall, and stands glowering at them.*]

TIPPING.

[*Coming down.*] So *this* is why you shirked supper, is it, Bultitude?

DULCIE.

[*Letting PAUL go.*] No, it isn't! [*With great dignity.*] You're *quite* mistaken, Tipping. I—I think I hear Mamma calling me. [*She hurries out by the door to the entrance hall.*]

TIPPING.

[*Swaggering up to PAUL.*] Been making her cry, have you? What have you been saying to her, eh?

PAUL.

[*Angrily.*] What the dooce is that to *you*, young Sir?

TIPPING.

Just this; I've been gone on Dulcie ever since last summer, and she never would look at me, and I couldn't think *why*. I know now, it's because *you've* been and cut me out!

PAUL.

"Cut you out!" You're an ass, Sir—not even a *clever* ass!

TIPPING.

[*Aggressively.*] None of your cheek now.—I just tell you this; if I catch you talking to her again, I'll give you the very juiciest licking you ever had in your life. So be careful!

PAUL.

You've no rivalry to fear from *me*, Sir. I am leaving immediately.

TIPPING.

Liar.

PAUL.

If, instead of calling me abusive names, you will tell me my nearest way to the station——
[COGGS and COKER come in from the hall.]

TIPPING.

[*To COGGS and COKER.*] I say! Here's Bultitude still sticking me out that he's going home to-night!

COKER.

[*To PAUL.*] You lunatic! What *is* the good of going on playing the giddy goat like this?

PAUL.

I am *not* playing the giddy goat. [*Making a movement towards the door.*] And I really *must* be going now. . . . Good night, my boys.

COGGS.

[*Intercepting him.*] Here, hold on a bit! What about that prize rabbit you said you'd get for me?

COKER.

And the pair of waltzing mice you promised *me*?

PAUL.

Don't worry me about mice and rabbits *now*—I'm in a hurry.

COGGS AND COKER.

[*Seizing PAUL by each arm.*] Are you? We'll jolly well twist your arms till you tell us where our mice and rabbits are! [*They wrench his arms violently.*]

PAUL.

You—you young brutes! I could have you up for assault for this! Stop, I say!

COKER.

You wouldn't have taken it as quietly as this last half! You just tell us where they are—or we'll go on!

PAUL.

Where? Why, at the railway station. In my play-box. I was just going to fetch them.

COGGS.

I saw your play-box in the hall just now. And as if any one would put rabbits in a *play-box*!

COKER.

Own up, will you? You haven't *got* any rabbits—or mice either! No *lies*, now!

PAUL.

Well, I haven't. I don't go about with rabbits concealed on my person. I'm not a conjuror!

[*Other boys enter with the Senior Assistant Master, MR. BLINKHORN, a tall, mild, spectacled man of about thirty.*]

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*To COKER, COGGS, and PAUL.*] Now, boys, boys! This is very disorderly, you know.

COKER.

[*As he and COGGS let PAUL go.*] We weren't being disorderly, Mr. Blinkhorn—we were only showing Bultitude how they make barley-sugar.

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*Suspiciously.*] You seemed to be using rather more violence than is required to explain *any* industrial process.

PAUL.

They were, Sir, they were! I have never in all my life been treated with such brutality—never, Sir, never!

MR. BLINKHORN.

Is this so, Coker?

COKER.

If you please, Sir, he had two shillings from me last half to buy me a pair of waltzing mice.

COGGS.

And three from me, Sir, for a pedigree rabbit.

COKER.

And he won't tell us whether he's brought them back with him or not. Will *you* ask him, Sir?

MR. BLINKHORN.

But surely the Doctor wouldn't allow you to keep such creatures on the premises?

PAUL.

Of course not! Absurd!

COKER.

Yes, he would, Sir. In the outhouse. We got *leave* to.

MR. BLINKHORN.

Well, Bultitude, what have you to say about your failure to produce these animals?

PAUL.

If you want to know, Sir, they were such insanitary nuisances in a London house that they had to be got rid of.

MR. BLINKHORN.

A very proper answer. And, as you are unable to meet your obligations, all you have to do is to return the money entrusted to you—five shillings, was it not?

PAUL.

Excuse me—but it would be *most* inconvenient just now. It—it so happens that five shillings are all I have in the world at this moment. And I require the money for—for other purposes.

MR. BLINKHORN.

If you decline to pay your just debts, Bultitude, I shall be forced,—much as I should regret

bringing you into trouble the first night of the term,—to report the matter to Dr. Grimstone.

PAUL.

For Heaven's sake, Sir, don't do *that*! I repudiate all liability—but I'll pay—I'll pay! [*Taking out coins with a very bad grace, and handing them to COKER and COGGS.*] There—there's your two, and your three, and be hanged to you!

COKER AND COGGS.

[*Pocketing the money.*] *That's* all right, Bulti-tude. [*To MR. BLINKHORN.*] Thanks, Sir, for seeing fair play.

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*Going to his table on the right.*] That will do. Go to your usual places, till the Doctor comes in and dismisses you to bed. [*The boys take their seats; JOLLAND and TIPPING at desk A, CHAWNER and BIDDLECOMB at desk B.*]

PAUL.

[*In a savage undertone to COKER, as he sits down with him at desk C.*] Do you know what you've done, you young blood-suckers? You've compelled me to stay here and tell Dr. Grimstone *everything*!

[MR. BLINKHORN motions PAUL to the vacant place on right of the DOCTOR'S desk. COKER and KIFFIN are at desk D at right angles to PAUL and COGGS; other boys at desks on the right.]

JOLLAND.

[*Leaning towards PAUL and whispering through his joined hands.*] I say, buck up, old chap! When Grim comes in, show him you aren't afraid of him!

PAUL.

Keep your advice to yourself, Sir. *I shall know how to assert myself.* [*He sniffs and looks round angrily at COGGS, on his right, who has just put a large bullseye in his mouth and is leaning across him.*] Pah! Peppermint!

[*DR. GRIMSTONE enters from the study and takes up a position on the hearthrug. He appears in high good humour.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Well, my boys, you have had your supper, and now it is high time you all retired [*his smile heralds a coming joke*] to the adjacent county of—ah—Bedfordshire. [*All laugh heartily, except KIFFIN, who is weeping silently, and PAUL, who utters an impatient exclamation.*]

PAUL.

Ah—flippancy apart, Dr. Grimstone [*sensation, and a few sniggers*], may I ask if you permit your boys to make common nuisances of themselves?

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*After a momentary surprise, pointedly.*] Under

no circumstances, Bultitude. Under *no* circumstances.

PAUL.

Then I may tell you that the boy on my left [*indicating* COGGS] is sucking a peppermint strong enough to poison a perfumery shop! [*General sensation ; JOLLAND looks bewildered.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*In an awful voice.*] Is this accusation true, Coggs?

COGGS.

[*Indistinctly.*] It's only a bullseye, Sir.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Enough. You have admitted your guilt. [*He turns to fireplace ; COKER, watching his opportunity, rises and kicks PAUL'S shin, and returns demurely to his seat.*]

PAUL.

[*Suddenly.*] Ow! Doctor! That young savage [*indicating* COKER] has just given me a severe kick! [*JOLLAND suppresses a groan.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

And so, Coker, you endeavour to emulate the Wild Ass in more ways than one, do you? Very well, Sir, you will bring me the line: "To kick one's fellow-creatures is conduct unworthy of a

Christian," written out five hundred times by eight o'clock to-morrow evening. *You, Coggs, will write out the same number of times the following words: "I must not ruin my digestion by devouring surreptitious and unwholesome dainties."*

COKER.

How many R's in syrup?

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Surreptitious dainties. [COKER and COGGS scribble the lines on scraps of paper. DR. GRIMSTONE goes to his chair.] Bultitude, I am bound to say that you have shown considerable moral courage in drawing my attention to these evil practices. I thank you, publicly.

PAUL.

[In a tone of affable disclaimer.] Not at all, Sir, not at all! [Turning round to KIFFIN.] For goodness sake, boy, cry into your pocket-handkerchief if you must cry, instead of sniffing in that exasperating way!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Were you crying, Kiffin?

KIFFIN.

I—I didn't mean to, Thir!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Beware of commencing your new life in a spirit

of revolt and antipathy, Sir. I allow no repining under *my* roof. I'll establish a tone of un murmuring happiness and trustful content in this School; if I have to flog every boy as long as I can stand over him. To return to Coggs: I should like to feel that he is alone in his iniquity. I have implicit confidence in your honour, and if you assure me that such is the case —

ALL.

Oh, we do, Sir, we do!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

You can convince me by bringing in your play-boxes, which are still in the hall, and opening them in my presence.

ALL.

[*In tones of suppressed dismay.*] Oh!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Let every boy fetch in his box. [*The boys begin to file out by the door on the right; PAUL lingering.*] Every boy! [PAUL follows the others out hastily.]

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*To DR. GRIMSTONE.*] You were going to tell me something about a revised curriculum for the Upper Form.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Ah, yes. I have a draft of it in my study

[*going to the study door*], if you will come in for a moment.

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*Rising.*] Certainly. [*He follows the DOCTOR into the study, and closes the door.*]

TIPPING.

[*Entering from the hall with play-box, followed by CHAWNER, BIDDLECOMB, JOLLAND, and the others, all carrying play-boxes. TIPPING looks round and finds the masters have gone, then says in a cautious whisper*] Coast clear! Look sharp, you chaps! Shove everything in the desks—quick now! [*There is a general scramble, all taking out cakes, pots of jam, etc., and hiding them in the desks with as little noise as possible.*]

CHAWNER.

[*After stuffing a bag of biscuits and several packets of chocolate surreptitiously into his pockets.*] I've brought nothing back, luckily!

TIPPING.

Grim won't think of looking at the desks. But fancy that chap Bultitude letting us in for *this*!

JOLLAND.

He never *meant* to! He was larking and got carried away, that's all!

TIPPING.

I'll carry *him* away! [*To PAUL as he enters,*

carrying a box painted with large initials R.B.]
There's no tuck inside *that*—Oh no, of course not!

PAUL.

I have every reason to believe that there is no—er—tuck in *this* box.

TIPPING.

And you go and try to get all of us into a row!
Sneak!

CHAWNER.

[With virtuous indignation.] Sneak! Oh, beastly Sneak! *[By this time the boys have arranged themselves in a semicircle with the boxes in front of them, PAUL being down in centre.]*

TIPPING.

If you're in *my* dormitory to-night, I'll pay you out for this!

PAUL.

I hope I shall not be in *anybody's* dormitory, Sir!

TIPPING.

[To the others.] What shall we *do* to him?
Toss him in a blanket?

COGGS AND COKER.

That's it! Serve him jolly well right!

BIDDLECOMB.

No, I say, you chaps. Tossing in a blanket's quite gone out at all the *Public Schools*. I vote we flick at him with wet towels. It's better form and hurts a *lot* more!

OTHER BOYS.

Yes, yes. Wet towels are the thing!

PAUL.

If I sleep here at all, I shall make a point of insisting on a separate bedroom. [*Derisive laughter.*]

TIPPING.

I wish you may get it! Now then, when are you going to open that box of yours?

PAUL.

[*Fumbling in his pockets.*] As soon as I can find the key. [*He finds it, and proceeds to unlock the box.*] There is nothing here that Dr. Grinstone could possibly—[*opening the lid and recoiling.*] Good gad!

TIPPING.

[*Looking over PAUL'S shoulders.*] Hul-lo! Why, look *here*, you fellows! Here's this blighter who sneaked of Cogg's for sucking bullseyes with his own beastly box chock full of 'em! *And* toffee! *And* butterscotch!

COKER.

[*Looking.*] And jam!

COGGS.

[*Joining COKER.*] And gingerbread and Turkish delight! I *do* call that cool!

CHAWNER.

I wouldn't be *you* for something, Bultitude! *You'll* catch it!

PAUL.

No, no. You can *have* 'em, all of you! Hide 'em somewhere—anywhere! [*He turns the things wildly out of the box on to the floor.*]

TIPPING.

I like that! Just you put 'em all back again, will you, you young swine!

PAUL.

Don't address me in that familiar way, Sir. I will *not* put them back.

TIPPING.

All right! [*He trips PAUL up.*] Just sit on him, will you, Biddlecomb, for a bit. [*BIDDLECOMB sits on PAUL, while TIPPING replaces everything in the box.*]

CHAWNER.

[*Whispering.*] Cavè, you chaps! [*BIDDLECOMB*

rises hastily, and PAUL scrambles to his feet. TIPPING is still bending over PAUL'S box as the DOCTOR enters from study.]

TIPPING.

[For the DOCTOR'S benefit.] I've got your box to unlock now, Bultitude. *[He moves back to his own box.]*

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[As he passes down to the semicircle inspecting the boxes.] Good! . . . Yes. . . . Very good! . . . Excellent! . . . Most satisfactory! . . . *[Stopping halfway, noticing PAUL'S demeanour].* Yes, I think there is no occasion to continue this inspection. The rest may remove their boxes. *[The boys file out with their boxes; PAUL seizes his with alacrity, and is hurrying after them.]* Stay, Bultitude. Unless I am mistaken, your expression betrays distinct relief.

PAUL.

[With one foot on lid of box.] I—I have nothing to declare, Sir, nothing whatever!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

In that case you can have no objection to opening your box.

PAUL.

If you insist, Dr. Grimstone, if you insist.

But remember [*as he reluctantly unlocks the box*], I disclaim all responsibility beforehand.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*As he examines the contents.*] What! Cake! Dough-nuts! Strawberry jam! Peppermints! And Turkish delight. Bultitude, Bultitude! Here is depravity indeed!

PAUL.

It is no depravity of *mine*! I never knew they were there!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Then why that look of guilt?

PAUL.

[*Losing his temper.*] I tell you it's ridiculous—I never *touch* such stuff! Make me bilious in no time! I gave strict orders that the housekeeper's room was *not* to be ransacked to make a set of rascally boys ill at my expense. It's not *my* fault that I've been disobeyed! [*The other boys return.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Puzzled.*] H'm. You *may* be innocent, Bultitude. I shall confiscate this—ah—contraband and allow you the benefit of the doubt. You can go. And now, boys, quietly to your respective dormitories! [*He moves to the right, and stands between desks E and G.*] Good-night. [*Shaking hands with boys as they pass out.*] Good-night. . . .

Tipping, I have put you in Number One this term, with Coker, Coggs, Biddlecomb, and Bultitude.

TIPPING.

[*In PAUL'S ear as he passes.*] You wait till I get you upstairs!

PAUL.

Wild horses will not get me upstairs, Sir!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*To TIPPING as he passes.*] Good-night, my boy. [TIPPING goes out, leaving PAUL alone with the DOCTOR, who sits in his arm-chair between the windows.] Now, Bultitude, you know your room.

PAUL.

Dr. Grimstone! When you have heard what I have to tell, you will not expect me to share a room with those—those unspeakable young ruffians!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

It is not my habit, Bultitude, to encourage tale-bearing. Nevertheless, if you have any further disclosures to make respecting your companions, it may be my duty to hear you.

PAUL.

[*Exasperated.*] Great heavens, Sir, I'm not a detective! What I have to say concerns Myself, and, as a citizen, as a householder, I insist—[*As DR. GRIMSTONE glares.*] I—I mean, I request——!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

You have come back this term, Sir, with a very singular manner of expressing yourself—a very singular manner indeed. It confirms me in the suspicion that you are deliberately striving to mimic and burlesque your excellent parent.

PAUL.

It is no burlesque! [*The study door opens and MR. BLINKHORN comes out with a document.*] I see we are not alone. There are domestic secrets, Sir, which can only be alluded to in the strictest privacy. Er—could we find some place where we are less likely to be overheard? I suppose you have a study?

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*In a terrible voice as he rises.*] Yes, Sir, I have a study—and I have a cane! Be off to your dormitory, Sir, before you provoke me beyond all bearing! Not another word! Go!

[*PAUL opens his mouth as if to protest, and then, seeing the hopelessness of his situation, gives it up in despair and goes slowly out as the curtain falls.*]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

THE SECOND ACT.

The Scene represents the same class-room as in the previous Act. The time is afternoon, some days later.

The blinds of the windows at the back are now drawn up, and show a wintry landscape of low grey hills, dotted with black trees and hedgerows. Through the window down on the right the bare branches of trees can be seen, indicating that there is a garden some five or six feet below the window.

The clock is at ten minutes past two. Books, copy-books, etc., are lying about on the desks.

[As the curtain rises BIDDLECOMB, COKER, and COGGS enter through the door on the right, which door is left open. N.B.—All the boys in this Act wear tweed suits, Norfolk jackets, and knickerbockers, according to their ages, with Eton collars and black neckties.]

COKER.

[Sitting on the edge of desk D.] One more dinner over, thank Goodness! Grim needn't be afraid of our over-eating ourselves *here!* All I could do to get that beastly suet pudding down!

BIDDLECOMB.

[*Darkly, leaning against desk G.*] Some day I mean to write home about that suet pudding. They do give you decent food at *Public Schools*!

COGGS.

What *I* bar most is the boiled mutton. Most of it *fat*!

COKER.

Think Grim spotted Jolland shovelling it into an envelope to-day? I saw him glaring.

BIDDLECOMB.

It would be just old Jolland's luck if he did!

[*MR. TINKLER enters with TIPPING, and COKER rises. MR. TINKLER is about twenty-five, an undersized, white-faced young man, with a feeble swagger. He wears a Norfolk jacket of a rather large pattern, darker trousers, and a club tie of gaudy hues.*]

MR. TINKLER.

[*Continuing conversation with TIPPING.*] Yes, I might have done *anything* at Cambridge if I'd chosen, but, to tell you the truth, all the time I was up I hardly opened a book—none of us “bloods” *did*, you know.

TIPPING.

I shall be a "blood" if I go up to the Varsity. What is a "blood" exactly?

MR. TINKLER.

A "blood"? Oh, well, a bit of a dare-devil, so to speak. [*KIFFIN and the rest of the school, except PAUL, CHAWNER, and JOLLAND, come in; KIFFIN has now become acclimatised, and is rather given to put himself forward.*] Yes. [*With a significant chuckle.*] I've been in some rare rags in my time!

COKER.

Do *tell* us about them, Sir!

OTHER BOYS.

[*Together.*] Yes, do, Sir, do!

MR. TINKLER.

No, no. Better not. I'm supposed to set you fellows a good example. But I rather—er—went the pace up there—which makes it all the more of a come-down to be stuck in a hole like this!

BIDDLECOMB.

It may be a hole, Sir, still—for a *Private School*—we're not so bad at footer, *are we?*

MR. TINKLER.

[*Loftily.*] What you fellows play isn't what *I* call footer. More like footle!

TIPPING.

Then did *you* play footer at Cambridge?
[JOLLAND enters.]

MR. TINKLER.

At Cambridge! I very nearly played *for* Cambridge! Just missed my Rugger Blue by the merest shave!

TIPPING.

[*With increased respect.*] Did you really, Sir? I wish you'd play *here* sometimes, 'stead of sitting on a rail reading.

MR. TINKLER.

Ah, well, you see, these half-holidays are the only chance I get to keep in touch with the latest literary movements.

JOLLAND.

Was that one of the latest literary movements you were reading yesterday, Sir—with a picture outside of no end of a jolly girl shooting a chap with a revolver?

MR. TINKLER.

[*As he takes out of his pocket a shilling novel with a highly sensational cover.*] This? "The Morals of a Marchioness," by *Cecil Vandeleur*? A very remarkable work—but perhaps it *would* be better in a brown paper cover. Here, Kiffin,

you're a neat-fingered little bounder—just cover it for me, will you? [He tosses it to KIFFIN, who catches it and goes with it to desk on right.]

KIFFIN.

[As he takes out a sheet of brown paper.] Pleath, Thir, I know all *about* this book!

OTHER BOYS.

You! What cheek! Dry up, can't you! [KIFFIN cuts the brown paper and proceeds to fold it neatly over the covers of the volume.]

MR. TINKLER.

It shows up most powerfully the sort of things that go on in Society. It's evidently by a man who knows his way *about—but—er—not* a book for babes and sucklings, exactly—it's for men of the *world*.

KIFFIN.

I know who *wrote* it, Thir—and it wathn't a *man!* It'th by Mith Mutkinth, who wath my nurthery governeth when I wath quite a kid. Pupthy and Mumthy—I mean, my Pater and Mater—*both* thaid it wath thilly thtuff, and thee ought to be *thmacked* for it! *[Some of the boys snigger.]*

MR. TINKLER.

[Out of countenance for the moment.] Ah? I daresay—I daresay. I've hardly had time to look

into it yet. It struck me as rather rot. Time you fellows began to get ready for footer, isn't it?

BIDDLECOMB.

What sides are we going to play this afternoon, Tipping? You going to pick up again with Bultitude?

TIPPING.

Bultitude? Oh, he's no good this half—lost all his nerve.

KIFFIN.

He runth away when he thees the ball coming. I don't—and he'th ever tho much bigger than me!

JOLLAND.

[*Coming towards KIFFIN.*] Shut up! A young beggar like you has no business to go giving his opinions about the Upper School! [KIFFIN goes on covering the book, abashed.]

TIPPING.

Still, he's come back a downright funk this time—besides being a sneak. [CHAWNER enters.]

CHAWNER.

[*Suspiciously.*] Who are you talking about, Tipping? Not me?

TIPPING.

[*Hastily.*] *You?* No, no, of *course* not! About Bultitude. I say, Jolland, you and I had better pick up sides.

JOLLAND.

Can't. I'm kept in. Got an impot. . . . I say, Mr. Tinkler, what's the Latin for: "It is a flagrant breach of good manners to conceal one's fat at dinner"? I've got to write it out.

MR. TINKLER.

[*Coming to fireplace on left.*] I'm sure *I* don't know. Don't profess to be a swell at classics. [*Grandly.*] The mathematical was *my* tripos.

JOLLAND.

[*Innocently.*] Didn't you get a wooden spoon or something, Sir, for being last? [*He turns and winks at the others.*]

MR. TINKLER.

[*With dignity.*] Er—I don't know where you heard *that*. I took an Honour degree. When *are* you fellows going up to change for footer? [PAUL enters.]

TIPPING.

Oh, here's Bultitude—at last! I say, Bultitude, you and me'll have to choose sides for footer.

COKER.

[To PAUL.] And don't you pick *me* unless you mean to play up!

COGGS.

Nor yet me! None of your slacking!

PAUL.

I do not propose to pick *anybody*. [To MR. TINKLER.] Dr. Grimstone has given me permission to stay in this afternoon.

MR. TINKLER.

[*Coming forward.*] Has he? Why?

PAUL.

Because I'm not feeling at all well.

MR. TINKLER.

Aren't you? What's wrong with you?

PAUL.

A slight touch of liver, I fancy. It takes me after meals — the kind of meals I get *here*! [*Laughter.*]

MR. TINKLER.

Oh, nonsense! Running about after the ball will soon set you up.

PAUL.

It's far more likely to knock me over, Sir.

My doctor expressly warned me against *all* violent exercise immediately after lunch.

MR. TINKLER.

Oh well, that's enough about your symptoms. Hurry up and change, the rest of you. You'll find me on the football field. [*Some of the younger boys go out. KIFFIN rises*]: Pleath, Thir! [*he offers the book.*] [*As he takes it from KIFFIN, and moves to the glazed door on the left.*] Thanks. [*He goes out by the glazed door.*]

TIPPING.

[*To the elder boys.*] Come on, you chaps. [*All, except PAUL and JOLLAND, go out by the door to the hall, leaving PAUL and JOLLAND together.*]

JOLLAND.

[*With concern to PAUL.*] I say. You're not *really* feeling seedy, are you?

PAUL.

[*Bitterly.*] Much *you* care what I'm suffering here!

JOLLAND.

We *used* to be chums, you know! And of course, if you're *suffering*, that would *account* for it.

PAUL.

Account for *what*?

JOLLAND.

For the way you've been going on. You aren't the chap you were *last* half. *Any* one can see that!

PAUL.

Dr. Grimstone can't! I've had to give up all attempts to enlighten *him*. And how a mere boy like you——

JOLLAND.

Oh, *shut* it! I'm fed up with that piffle! And I tell you straight, Bultitude,—you've come back this half a regular rotter!

PAUL.

[*With dignity.*] A rotter!

JOLLAND.

That's what you *are*. You *won't* play the game!

PAUL.

I played football *once*—nothing shall induce me to do so again!

JOLLAND.

That isn't what I *meant*. You use such beastly long words, and you're a worse sneak than

Chawner even! You're not even any good at "prep." Why *I* used to crib my exes off *you*—and now you can't do a single *line* of 'em yourself! I don't mind your *cribbing*, you know. Only, if you *will* copy all my mistakes instead of putting in a few of your own, you're safe to be found out—and then we shall *both* get swished!

PAUL.

Swished! Swished! That is my constant terror, day and night! I tell you I feel like—like what's his name, with an infernal birch hanging by a single hair over my head!

JOLLAND.

Not over your *head*—and, after all, who minds a swishing?

PAUL.

I mind a swishing. If I had to submit to such—such an indignity at *my* time of life, how—*how* could I ever hold up my head again?

JOLLAND.

Blest if *I* can understand what's happened to you!

PAUL.

Of course not! You're too young, Sir! If I could only tell my story to some grown-up person—like Dr. Grimstone. But I've tried *that*!

JOLLAND.

[*Disgusted.*] What, is there something *else* you want to sneak about?

PAUL.

No, no, no! What I have to tell is a purely personal matter! It concerns my home and family.

JOLLAND.

[*Reassured.*] Oh, if it's about your people?
[*Taking his arm.*] Well, if you daren't tackle Grim, why not try old Blinkie? He's a kind sort of old ass, and he seems rather nuts on you this half.

PAUL.

I *might* speak to Mr. Blinkhorn. But when shall I get an opportunity?

JOLLAND.

He'll be here soon—he generally comes out and doubles round the playground for a breather before footer. [*As the door from the hall opens.*] Told you so! [MR. BLINKHORN *enters.*] Now's your chance!

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*He is wearing grey flannel trousers and football boots, but ordinary coat and waistcoat, etc.*] How is it you two haven't gone up to put on your football things?

JOLLAND.

Bultitude's excused, Sir—he's not quite the thing—and I've got an impot. Oh, what's the Latin for: "It is a flagrant breach of good manners to conceal one's fat at dinner"? [PAUL sits in dejection at desk on left.]

MR. BLINKHORN.

I should hardly have thought that corpulence was easily concealed in *any* circumstances.

JOLLAND.

No, Sir, but mutton fat is—in an envelope, Sir. I've got to write it out fifty times.

MR. BLINKHORN.

Well, let me see. [*After considering.*] You might render it thus: "Contra bonos est mores" [JOLLAND scribbles it down on his cuff] "apud coenam pingue celere." Mind, I don't say it's Ciceronian—but it will serve.

JOLLAND.

Thanks awf'ly, Sir. If it *isn't* very classy Latin, I daresay it will be good enough for Grim!

MR. BLINKHORN.

"Grim"? Jolland!

JOLLAND.

Sorry, Sir, Dr. Grimstone, I mean. I'll go and cork it down in the detention-room. [*As he goes to the door on the right.*] And, oh, I say, Sir. I think Bultitude would like to speak to you about something. [*He goes out.*]

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*Going to PAUL and laying a sympathetic hand on his shoulder.*] I have been expecting this for some time, Bultitude. I have been observing you closely. You are not the idle thoughtless boy who left here for his Christmas vacation.

PAUL.

I'm glad *somebody* has seen it at last, Sir!

MR. BLINKHORN.

I noticed it from the night you arrived.

PAUL.

Then it would have been kinder if you had mentioned it before!

MR. BLINKHORN.

I should have—but I shrank from even seeming to force your confidence. I can easily understand that your present life is not without its trials.

PAUL.

You are perfectly correct *there*, Sir. It is not.

MR. BLINKHORN.

It is only natural that your companions should resent the change in your character, and hold aloof from you.

PAUL.

Hold aloof? I only wish they would!

MR. BLINKHORN.

They may even employ persecution.

PAUL.

May? They do, Sir, they do! Why, only last night I found two hairbrushes in my bed!

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*Raising his hand in protest.*] Stop! Complaints are unmanly. Believe me, Bultitude, you will live all this down, in time.

PAUL.

It will live *me* down, Sir. I cannot endure what I'm going through *much* longer!

MR. BLINKHORN.

Courage, courage! You have only to persevere. And, after all, there is no reason why you should not be cheerful. Youth, it has been beautifully

said, is the Spring-tide of Life. And no time is so free from care and responsibility, so thoroughly happy, as the days we spend at School.

PAUL.

[*Interrupting impatiently.*] Bosh, Sir, bosh! I'll be dashed if I stand that infernal cant and humbug from you or anybody else!

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*Scandalised.*] Bultitude, this language is highly unbecoming, in your *present* state. Remember—you have put *off* the Old Man now.

PAUL.

[*Exasperated.*] Do you suppose *I* need to be told *that*? I thought you understood—but you're evidently no wiser than the rest of 'em, Sir! [*As he goes to the right in disgust.*] I've no more to say to you!

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*Going towards the glazed door.*] You have disappointed me, Bultitude. It seems you have already become a backslider! [*At the glazed door.*] Let me urge you—retrace your steps while there is yet time! [*He goes out.*]

PAUL.

[*Alone, to himself.*] And I was actually going to confide in that solemn ass! [*DULCIE enters from the hall.*]

DULCIE.

[*As she sees PAUL.*] I *thought* you might be here. I wanted a talk with you.

PAUL.

My good child. I can't talk to you *now*. Run away, do!

DULCIE.

You've been like this ever since you came back! Dick! you—you haven't changed your mind?

PAUL.

Not my *mind*! But you'd never understand!

DULCIE.

I know what it *is*—there's some horrid girl you like better than me!

PAUL.

Pish! Don't talk such nonsense, my dear. And *do* go away!

DULCIE.

Not till you've told me who she is. [*Stamping her foot.*] I *will* know!

PAUL.

I've nothing to tell. You'll get me into trouble if you go on like this, you know!

DULCIE.

You're a disagreeable, hateful boy, and I've a good mind not to have anything more to do with you! [*She goes towards the door on the right as MR. BLINKHORN returns through the glazed door on the left.*]

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*Without seeing DULCIE, and addressing PAUL.*] I begin to understand, Bultitude—I begin to *understand*! Just now, Sir, while I was doubling round the playground, *this* [*holding out a white cocked-hat note*] fell at my feet! As it was obviously written by a girlish hand, I felt bound to read it.

PAUL.

[*Coldly.*] Really, Sir, I've no desire for these confidences. If you are fortunate enough to have made a conquest——

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*Roused.*] Enough of this ribaldry, Sir! This is addressed to *you*, and signed "C. D." *Who* is "C. D."?

DULCIE.

[*Faintly.*] Oh!

PAUL.

[*Indifferently.*] I have no idea, Sir, no idea.

DULCIE.

[*In a louder tone.*] Oh!

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*Noticing her for the first time.*] Are you there, Dulcie? Do you know where your Papa is?

DULCIE.

No, Mr. Blinkhorn. He's not in his study I know—perhaps in the drawing-room with Mother.

MR. BLINKHORN.

[*As he goes up towards the door to the hall.*] I will go and see. [*Turning at the door.*] Bultitude, it is my painful duty to report this—at once. [*He goes out.*]

PAUL.

[*Puzzled.*] What does the fellow mean? Report *what*?

DULCIE.

[*Indignantly.*] As if you didn't know who "C. D." is!

PAUL.

I do *not* know.

DULCIE.

Oh, you *dreadful* storyteller! When it's Connie Davenant, of course! Why, you used to

tease me last half by saying she wasn't half bad-looking—which she *is*!

PAUL.

I assure you there has been no flirtation on *my* side.

DULCIE.

On your *honour*?

PAUL.

On my honour! It's all a mistake—it is indeed!

DULCIE.

I believe you, Dick—I do, *really*. But if *Papa* doesn't——!

PAUL.

[*Uneasily.*] If your *Papa* doesn't—what *then*?

DULCIE.

He *might* what he calls “resort to drastic measures”! That means a *flogging*, you know.

PAUL.

Good Lord! And he won't listen to *me*! [*Falls into desk on right.*] But he might to *you*. It's my only chance! I—I really think I could make *you* understand.

DULCIE.

Try me, Dick, *try* me. [*Sits on desk beside*

him.] I'm sure it was all *her* fault! Now begin!

PAUL.

[*Sitting on the edge of desk G, while DULCIE sits by his side and snuggles close up to him.*] A very few days ago, my dear, I little expected to find myself in *this* position.

[TIPPING *enters from the hall in time to hear the last few words; he is in School cap embroidered "C. H. S.," football jersey, and shorts, etc.*]

TIPPING.

[*As he comes down.*] Oh, *didn't* you? But you knew jolly well what to expect if I found you in it—because I warned you!

DULCIE.

[*Without moving.*] Go away, Tipping! Don't you see we're busy? We don't want *you*. [*To PAUL.*] Go on, Dick, don't mind *him*!

PAUL.

[*To DULCIE, getting up.*] Er—perhaps we'd better resume this conversation later.

[BIDDLECOMB, CHAWNER, COKER, COGGS, KIFFIN, and the others, except JOLLAND, enter. All are in football costume similar to TIPPING'S.]

TIPPING.

[*To PAUL.*] You're *afraid*, that's what *you*

are! You pretend to think a lot of Dulcie, but you haven't the pluck to *fight* for her. I'll soon show her which of us two is the better man!

DULCIE.

[*Going to centre of room.*] I don't *want* to be shown—I *know*! And you're *not* to fight with him, Dick!

PAUL.

I've not the least *intention* of fighting with him. [*To TIPPING.*] Go away, boy, go away!

TIPPING.

Go away yourself!

PAUL.

[*Retreating to the window on the right.*] By all means!

TIPPING.

I *knew* you were a funk! Now then, will you come on, or take a licking?

KIFFIN.

[*Capering round them with delight.*] There'th going to be a fight! There'th going to be a fight!

PAUL.

There is *not* going to be anything of the sort!

BIDDLECOMB.

I say, Tipping. I s'pose you know fighting's bad form at all the *best* Public Schools?

TIPPING.

What do *I* care? This is a *Private* School, ain't it? [*Squaring up to PAUL.*] Come on!

DULCIE.

[*Springing on to the seat of a desk by the DOCTOR's table.*] Don't hit one another in the *face*!

PAUL.

[*As the boys form in a semicircle round him and TIPPING.*] One moment! Let me clearly understand. [*To TIPPING.*] Are you proposing to fight me for the—ah—affections of that little girl there?

TIPPING.

[*Sullenly.*] You know *why* well enough. Are you going to stand up to me, or aren't you?

PAUL.

Excuse me—but I fancy I can easily arrange this little matter and avoid any—ah—personal encounter. She's a very nice child, but I've no wish whatever to stand in your way, my boy. I—I give up all claim to her. [*Hisses and groans.*]

DULCIE.

[*Jumping down from seat.*] Oh, Dick! I

wouldn't have believed it. *Never!* And I hope Tipping *will* lick you—so there!

TIPPING.

And I jolly well *will*, too! [*Rushing at PAUL.*]
For being such a cad!

[PAUL *hits out wildly in self-defence and catches TIPPING in the stomach; TIPPING collapses suddenly.*]

THE BOYS.

Coward! Foul blow! Below the belt!

PAUL.

[*Surprised.*] I only struck him in self-defence—but I don't seem to have pleased you *now*!

TIPPING.

[*Almost doubled up and gasping in centre of room.*] You—you *sweep!* I can't fight you if you won't fight fair!

CHAWNER.

[*To BIDDLECOMB.*] If it was a *Public School* wouldn't they make Bultitude run the gauntlet for this?

BIDDLECOMB.

Most likely—we will, anyway! Run him outside, you fellows!

[COKER and COGGS *seize PAUL, and hustle him out through the glazed door on the right.*]

CHAWNER.

[*To the others.*] If *I* were you fellows, I should tie a stone or two in your handkerchiefs.

THE OTHERS.

[*Pulling out handkerchiefs.*] Yes, yes! Good idea! We'll give it him! [*They rush out, leaving TIPPING and CHAWNER with DULCIE.*]

DULCIE.

Tipping! Go after them! I don't want him hurt, do you hear?

TIPPING.

[*Faintly, and still writhing.*] Oh, I dare say! You don't seem to care how he's hurt *me*!

DULCIE.

Yes, I do—I mean, I *will*—if you'll only save him!

TIPPING.

[*Going after the others.*] Oh, well, if you put it like *that*! [*He goes out.*]

[*DULCIE is going towards the door on the right, when DR. GRIMSTONE enters.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Why, Dulcie, my child! [*Seeing CHAWNER.*] Ah, Chawner! Do you know where Bultitude is? [*DULCIE goes out by door to hall.*]

CHAWNER.

[*Demurely.*] I think he's in the playground Sir.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Then tell him to come to me—at once.

CHAWNER.

At once, Sir? Yes, Sir. [*He goes out by the glazed door on the left.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Alone, takes out the cocked-hat note and reads it once more; to himself.*] He may be blameless. But if not—if not! [*He is pacing the floor with rising wrath, as PAUL enters from the glazed door, followed by CHAWNER.*]

PAUL.

[*Apprehensively.*] I—I was given to understand that you wish to see me, Dr. Grimstone?

DR. GRIMSTONE.

I do. [*To CHAWNER.*] You can go, Chawner, my boy. [*CHAWNER goes out, leaving glazed door ajar.*] Mr. Blinkhorn has just—very properly—handed me this. [*Showing the note.*] What do you mean, Sir, by receiving such a communication?

PAUL,

I—I *didn't* receive it.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

No shuffling, Sir! I presume you will not deny that it was *intended* for you. Listen to this, Sir. [*Reading.*] "My dear Bultitude, how is it I haven't seen you up the pole lately?" Up *what* pole, Sir?

PAUL.

I can't say—it has never been my practice to go up *any* poles.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

It concludes thus: "Do drop a line to your loving friend, C. D." . . . Well, what have you to say?

PAUL.

[*Crossing to right* DR. G. *turns to face him*; CHAWNER *is seen at door, listening.*] It's a highly improper letter for any young lady to write to a perfect stranger. But I've given this Miss Connie Davenant no encouragement—none whatever.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

And yet you know her name! Bultitude, you have betrayed yourself!

PAUL.

I never heard her name till about ten minutes ago! And I *ask* you, Dr. Grimstone, as a man of the world, how am *I* to prevent forward young ladies from writing me love-letters? Why, she might have written *you* one!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

She happens to have preferred *you*, Bultitude. However, I admit there is some force in what you say. If I had any clear proof that you had *responded* to these advances, I should have felt compelled to give you a severe flogging—at the very least. As it is, I stay my hand—though I recommend you to avoid all suspicion of misconduct for the future.

PAUL.

I—I shall be only too happy to *do* so! And, as—as our relations seem—er—rather more cordial, Dr. Grimstone, *would* you kindly allow me to tell you certain facts I've been vainly trying to disclose ever since I came here? You—you've no *notion* how serious it is!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Looking at him thoughtfully.*] You puzzle me, Bultitude—you puzzle me exceedingly. Such pertinacity in a boy of your age is unusual. If you really have some revelation to make, it may be well that I should hear it. [*As PAUL makes a movement.*] Not now. I have a letter to write. Wait there, and I will summon you presently. [*He goes into his study.*]

PAUL.

[*To himself, overjoyed.*] At last! At last!
[CHAWNER enters from the glazed door.]

CHAWNER.

Did I overhear you saying you were going to tell the Doctor something, Bultitude?

PAUL.

[*Starting.*] Eh? Very likely, if you were listening to a conversation that didn't concern you.

CHAWNER.

But it does. You're going to tell him something about all of *us*.

PAUL.

Nonsense, Sir! What I'm going to tell him is entirely about myself.

CHAWNER.

You may *think* so. But directly Grim begins asking questions, it will all come out. *I* know! And, anyway, I forbid you to go in and tell him anything at all.

PAUL.

Oh! You *do*, do you? And how do you propose to prevent me?

CHAWNER.

I *can*. Easily.

PAUL.

I should like to know how.

CHAWNER.

Didn't Grim say that if he'd any proof that you'd ever encouraged Connie Davenant, he'd give you a severe swishing?

PAUL.

He did. He was quite right, from *his* point of view. But I never *have* encouraged the girl.

CHAWNER.

Oh, *haven't* you, though? You forget that letter you wrote her last half! I found it lying about and kept it—in case it might be useful some day. [*Half showing it in inside pocket of his jacket.*] And here it is!

PAUL.

[*Staggered.*] I—I never wrote it!

CHAWNER.

It's *signed*, "Dick Bultitude." You write better now than you did then—but Grim will know it's *your* hand all right.

PAUL.

And—and you mean to show Dr. Grimstone that letter?

CHAWNER.

Only if you try to tell him things—not unless.

PAUL.

You young *fiend*! You want to ruin me, do you? Well, you may do your worst, Sir—I shall be heard before you! [*The study door opens very slightly.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE'S VOICE.

[*From study.*] I am ready for you now, Bultitude.

CHAWNER.

[*In a whisper.*] Tell him it's nothing, and you won't trouble him!

PAUL.

I shall not, Sir!

CHAWNER.

[*Barring his way to the study.*] Then I'll see him first! [*They close and wrestle for the right of first entrance; while they are doing so, the door opens, and DR. GRIMSTONE appears.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

What is this unseemly contest? Violent again, Bultitude? [PAUL and CHAWNER release one another.]

CHAWNER.

Please, Sir, hear *me* first, Sir!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

What! Have *you* something on your mind *too*, Chawner?

CHAWNER.

Yes, Sir; Bullitude knew I was going to tell you something. I thought you ought to know about him, so he was trying to get in first and tell you some falsehood about the other fellows, Sir!

PAUL.

It's a lie! Dr. Grimstone! I *implore* you not to listen to that fellow till you've heard *me*!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

If your conscience were clear, Bullitude, you could have no object in trying to silence him. I hear Chawner first.

CHAWNER.

[*Offering Dr. G. the letter.*] Then, please, Sir, will you read this? It's one Bullitude wrote last half to that Miss Davenant, Sir!

[*Dr. G. takes the letter and reads it; CHAWNER makes a triumphant grimace at PAUL, who stands paralysed.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*After reading the letter.*] You did well to show

me this, Chawner, *very* well! [*He marches down on PAUL.*] And so, contemptible liar and hypocrite, you are unmasked! You assured me you had given this girl no encouragement. And here—here is a note, in the vile handwriting you have only recently abandoned—a note in which you address her as “Your dearest Connie,” and have the impudence to compliment her on the hat she wore in Church! What am I to *do* with you? How can I find a fitting punishment for such depraved duplicity as yours?

PAUL.

Don't ask *me*, Sir! Get it over—*whatever* it is!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

I have serious doubts whether a mere caning would have any lasting impression on you—whether it is not my duty to the parents of the other boys entrusted to my care to save your companions from any further risk of being contaminated by your example. [*PAUL looks at him in hopeless bewilderment.*] . . . Those doubts, Bultitude, have prevailed. [*DULCIE appears at door on right.*] I have decided I shall *not* flog you, Sir. I shall expel you publicly—before the whole school!

[*DULCIE is in dismay, CHAWNER triumphant, and PAUL scarcely able to believe in such good-fortune.*]

PAUL.

What, Dr. Grimstone? Do you mean it?
[He turns away to conceal his joy.] Expel me!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Protest is useless. My decision is irrevocable. I shall send you back to the hearth you have disgraced by an early train this evening. Chawner, call the whole school in and say that, as soon as they are in their places, I shall have a serious announcement to make to them. *[He goes into his study.]*

CHAWNER.

[To PAUL, as he goes towards the glazed door.]
 It's all your own doing, Bultitude! *[He goes out.]*

DULCIE.

[Coming down to him.] Expelled! Dick, I—I never thought it would come to *this!*

PAUL.

[With assumed resignation.] Nor I, my dear. But well, I must put up with it.

DULCIE.

[Going to study door.] You shan't be if I can help it. *[At door.]* Papa, papa! May I come in? *[She goes into study, as the boys enter from playground through the glazed door. All, except CHAWNER, are looking anxious and apprehensive. They take their seats as follows: TIPPING at the*

upper end of desk A; COKER and another boy at desk B; BIDDLECOMB and CHAWNER at desk C; COGGS at the further end of desk D; KIFFIN at lower end of desk A; and the rest at adjoining desks on the right.]

COKER.

I say! Why are we all called in like this? Any one know?

COGGS.

Chawner does!

TIPPING.

Chawner, you haven't been—why, you swore you *wouldn't*! You *might* tell us what it is!

CHAWNER.

[Hugging himself and grinning.] You'll hear soon enough!

[MR. TINKLER enters, and takes the chair behind the table on right; JOLLAND enters from the hall.]

JOLLAND.

[To PAUL, who is standing in the centre.] I've done my inpot! *[Looking round in surprise, as he sees them all solemnly seated.]* Hul-lo! What's up? *[His face falling as he lowers his voice.]* Not—not a row?

PAUL.

nly.] It may be some relief to your

minds to hear that you've merely been called in to see me publicly expelled. [*General murmur of relief and satisfaction.*]

SEVERAL BOYS.

Oh, is *that* it? Expelled!

TIPPING.

[*To PAUL.*] Expelled, are you? And a jolly good job too!

PAUL.

I entirely agree with you, my young friend. I shall be only too thankful to get out of this—this den of wild beasts—at last!

JOLLAND.

[*Who has taken his seat at the end of desk D, next to COGGS.*] Not you! You won't be expelled, old chap!

PAUL.

I shall! The Doctor distinctly said his decision was *irrevocable*.

JOLLAND.

I know better! He's not going to give up a hundred a year if *he* can help it. Not *much*!

[*DULCIE comes out of study.*]

DULCIE.

[*Going to PAUL.*] It's all *right*, Dick! I've

begged you off. You're not to be expelled after all!

JOLLAND.

Hooray! What did I *tell* you?

PAUL.

[*Blankly.*] I—I'm *not* to be expelled?

DULCIE.

No—only flogged!

PAUL.

Flogged! *Only* flogged! Oh, you dreadful child—if you knew what your interference has cost me!

DULCIE.

[*In a passion.*] And is *that* all you say? After what I've done for you! I wish I *hadn't* interfered now; I never will again! [*She goes up to door on the right, and turns before opening it.*] Tipping can hit you as much as ever he likes for what I care! And Papa is looking for his new cane—and I only hope it will *hurt*. [*She goes out, amidst faint murmurs of sympathy and applause.*]

MR. TINKLER.

I should advise you to sit down, Bultitude—while you *can*.

[PAUL totters to his place on right of DR. G.'s table and sits down.]

KIFFIN.

[*With glee.*] There'th going to be a thwishing !
I've never theen a thwishing !

JOLLAND.

[*Turning round savagely.*] You shut your silly
young head, will you ! [KIFFIN *subsides.*]

MR. TINKLER.

Quiet, boys, quiet !

[*The study door opens, and DR. GRIMSTONE enters. He is without a cane. He strides to his chair between the windows, and stands there for a moment of awful silence. All the boys rise. PAUL regards him with fascinated terror.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Sit down. [*The boys resume their seats.*] Some of you here may wonder why I have summoned you from the football field in this sudden and peremptory fashion. There is *one* at least who will not. It has but lately come to my knowledge that we have in our midst a youthful reprobate—[*Suddenly glaring down at PAUL.*] Yes, Richard Bultitude, as you well know, it is to *you* I am referring ! [*In tones of thunder.*] Stand there, Sir, out in the middle of the room, where your schoolfellows can see you, and learn a lesson from the spectacle of your degradation ! [PAUL *staggers to his feet automatically, and stands in the centre of the room, more dead than alive.*] Look upon him, as he cowers before you in all the hideousness of

his moral depravity. [PAUL *gasps*.] That Being—for I will not dignify him by the name of Boy—has not scrupled to conduct a secret correspondence with—with a young person of the opposite sex—a correspondence so precociously amatory in its character that I cannot bring myself to shock your innocent ears with its contents!

[*Sensation. The boys, except JOLLAND, endeavour to appear shocked; MR. TINKLER puts up his hand to his mouth, and coughs to conceal a grin.*]

PAUL.

[*Desperately.*] Dr. Grimstone! Even at the eleventh hour, I protest——!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Allowing his voice to boom to its full extent.*] Silence, Sir! In another moment I shall invite you to accompany me to the study, there to receive the castigation you have so richly merited! If I can score the lesson—[*a motor-horn outside suddenly sounds: "Toot!"*—so deeply upon your body—[*the motor-horn: "Toot-toot!"*—that it will remain indelibly engraven in your mind—[*motor-horn, with a prolonged wail, "Too-oo-oot!"*]] Really, these interruptions are most—— [He looks out of the window nearest the hall door.] Why, the car has stopped here! [He looks out again, then turns to PAUL.] Richard Bultitude, if *anything* can strike shame and confusion into your very soul, it is what I have now to tell you. Your unhappy

Father has just alighted at my front door! [*As he goes to the door on the right.*] Let none stir till I return! [*He goes out.*]

CHAWNER.

Your Governor's just got here in time, Dickie! [*General but subdued laughter.*]

PAUL.

[*Bitterly.*] You needn't be uneasy, you—you young *ghouls*! You won't lose your sport! It is merely postponed!

JOLLAND.

[*To the others.*] There, you see! He's showing some pluck, after all! [*Signs of a reaction in PAUL'S favour.*]

BIDDLECOMB.

Yes, by jove, he is! Beastly bad form rubbing it in like that!

COKER.

I am sorry for you, old man.

COGGS.

So'm I—*really* I am!

PAUL.

[*Sullenly.*] Oh, hang your sympathy!

DR. GRIMSTONE'S VOICE.

[*Outside, in hall.*] This way please, my dear Mr. Bultitude! Not *that* door!

DICK'S VOICE.

[*Outside.*] It's all right—I know. I only wanted to have just a squint at the school-room.

[*At the first sound PAUL retreats hastily to the mantelpiece, on which he leans with averted head as DICK enters in a motoring coat, cap and goggles, followed by DR. GRIMSTONE in some embarrassment.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*To DICK.*] You find them—hem—assembled—all assembled, you see.

DICK.

[*His manner is half audacious, half awkward. Although he feels in no danger, of being recognised as DICK, he cannot quite overcome his old fear of DR. GRIMSTONE, which he disguises as well as he can under a boyish swagger.*] I see. But I thought it was a half hol? [*With sudden comprehension.*] I say! Have I dropped in for a row? [*Suppressed amusement among the boys.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*With a sense of the delicacy of the situation.*] I should hardly—ah—describe it by *that* term, Mr. Bultitude.

DICK.

I bet Chawner's been at the sneaking game again!

[*Tittering*; CHAWNER *wriggles uncomfortable.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Eh? So you *know* him!

DICK.

[*Recollecting himself.*] No, no. Only heard of him, you know—*heard* of him.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

The—ah—fact is I have had to call the School together for—for a particular reason which—which I will explain presently. [*To the School.*] Er, boys, you are dismissed to the football field—all except Bultitude. [DICK *starts at the name, and then suppresses a giggle.* MR. TINKLER *rises and goes out by the glazed door.* KIFFIN *and the boys at desks on the right rise and file out after him.*] Won't you—er—remove your wraps?

DICK.

Well, it is a bit warm in here. [*He takes off his cap and coat, as TIPPING rises and is about to go out.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Summoning PAUL with a gesture after all the*

boys have gone out.] And now, Richard Bultitude, with what countenance can you face so fond a Father.

[PAUL comes forward, speechless with humiliation and fury.]

DICK.

[*Awkwardly.*] I didn't see you before. Er—how d'ye do? [*He advances offering his hand; PAUL puts both his behind his back and retreats.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*To PAUL.*] Ah! You feel that you have forfeited the right to grasp a Father's hand. That is—to some extent—a sign of grace—a sign of grace!

DICK.

Why, what's *he* been up to?

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Loath as I am to pain you, Mr. Bultitude, I cannot disguise the fact that, at the moment of your arrival, I was just about to—er—visit your son with corporal punishment.

DICK.

No! Hang it all! I won't have him swished!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

But, my dear Sir, you yourself begged me not to spare the rod!

DICK.

You're mistaken. I don't believe in flogging. Never did *me* any good. You must let him off this time.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Who is standing between PAUL and DICK.*] Er—since *you* intercede for him—— [*He suddenly sniffs suspiciously.*] But stay. . . . Yes, I am *not* mistaken! I distinctly perceive a flavour of peppermint. [*To PAUL.*] A proof, Sir, that you are still impenitent!

PAUL.

[*Exasperated.*] Great Heavens above! *I*—of all people in the world—sucking peppermint!

DICK.

[*To DR. GRIMSTONE.*] It's all right. It isn't him. It's me.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Astounded.*] Really? H'm! [*Consulting his watch.*] I'm *afraid* I must say good afternoon. Doubtless a few stern words from *your* lips—

DICK.

Oh yes. *I'll* talk to him!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Going up to door on right.*] Then, Richard, I will leave you to your good Father's admonitions.

[*At door.*] And may you take them to heart!
[*He goes out.*]

[*A pause. Then PAUL turns furiously on DICK.*]

PAUL.

And so, Sir, you have the inhumanity to come here to gloat over my misery!

DICK.

Jolly lucky for you I *did* come! Saved you a swishing, any way! And, besides, I—I rather wanted the fellows and—and Dulcie—to see my new motor.

PAUL.

Your new——! Do you mean to say you've actually *bought* a motor-car!

DICK.

N—no, Dad. I've only got it on trial. But Uncle Duke says, knowing the firm, he can get it for me a lot under trade price.

PAUL.

So that blackguard is living on you, is he? I thought as much! And with trade so bad as it is, *do* you suppose I can afford to keep a motor-car?

DICK.

Uncle Duke says he knows plenty of ways of getting money.

PAUL.

I daresay! [*With sudden misgivings.*] Dick! He—he hasn't been persuading you to—to put your name to anything, has he?

DICK.

Only once. And I didn't put *my* name, of course. I put *yours*.

PAUL.

[*Holding himself in.*] You put mine! And to what sort of paper?

DICK.

Oh, quite a little one, Dad—I forget what you call it—Oh, a cheque.

PAUL.

A cheque! And—do you recollect the—the amount? How many figures?

DICK.

I don't remember the figures, but I know there were a lot of noughts. Why? Was it *wrong*? [*He is sitting on a desk kicking his heels nervously.*]

PAUL.

Merely forgery, Sir; merely forgery! Good Gad, keep still, or you'll drive me mad! I—I should be glad to know how you've been conducting my business in Mincing Lane?

DICK.

Oh, I put in *most* of the time going up and down in the lift. Awfully decent sort the lift-porter chap—not a bit stuck-up.

PAUL.

[*Breaking out, and losing all control of himself.*] You—you miserable young cub! Do you know that you're ruining me—ruining me in money and reputation—by these damnable follies?

DICK.

No—but look *here*, Dad. You're *out* of it all now, you know!

PAUL.

[*Wild with rage.*] If I *am*, Sir, do you imagine I shall look calmly on and see you playing ducks and drakes with everything? You're a clumsy sort of impostor, Sir, after all—you couldn't face me for five minutes—you'd give yourself away—you know you would! . . . By Gad, I'll speak out *now*! [*As he goes to the door on the right.*] And we'll see what sort of figure you'll cut *then*!

DICK.

Stop a bit, Dad! If you like to try and get me into a jolly row, you can. But do you know what *I* shall do?

PAUL.

[*Turning.*] I should very much like to know what you *can* do!

DICK.

Well—I've still got Uncle Duke's talisman. [*Pulling out his chain, and showing the stone attached with other trinkets to the other end of his chain.*] I shall go straight back and give it to some one and tell 'em to wish this School, and every one in it—except Dulcie—stuck down at the North Pole or somewhere.

PAUL.

[*Conquered.*] No. I—I was *joking*, Dick. [*Coming down to him.*] I never meant it—I never meant it!

DICK.

Then—is it *Pax*?

PAUL.

Will you promise me never to part with that talisman to anybody without *my* consent?

DICK.

[*After reflection.*] Oh—all right. I don't mind promising *that*.

PAUL.

[*Anxiously.*] Perhaps you'd better let *me* have it. It doesn't seem very securely fastened.

DICK.

No, no—I'll keep it. I fastened it on myself with some wire off a champagne cork, so it's safe enough. And I say, look here, Dad. I want you to have as jolly a time of it as possible. After this half I'll send you to Harrow, or any Public School you like. *I* shan't grudge the expense. And, next hols, I'll buy you a pony!

PAUL.

[*Fiercely.*] A pony! I'll take no bribes from *you*, Sir!

DICK.

Oh, I *was* going to tip you, but I suppose, as you're so beastly proud——

PAUL.

I—I don't mind admitting that a—a tip *would* be—ah—very acceptable. [*With a flash of anger.*] Damn it, Sir, it's my own money!

DICK.

All right, you needn't get in a bait about it. [*Feeling in his pocket.*] Here you are. [*He hands PAUL a coin.*]

PAUL.

[*With irrepressible satisfaction.*] A sovereign!

DICK.

I'd let you have more, but that's all I've got. [*Going towards the open door; putting on motoring coat and cap.*] Good-bye, I must be off. [JOLLAND comes in from the glazed door on the left.] We've got a kids' party on to-night, and I promised Barbara I'd be home early. Good-bye. [*Seeing JOLLAND.*] That you, Jolland? Sorry I can't stop! Chin-chin, old chap! Chin-chin! [*He hurries off, pulling out his chain; the room grows darker.*]

JOLLAND.

[*Staring after DICK.*] I say, what a rum old bird your Governor is!

PAUL.

What's that to you, Sir? And what brings you in here?

JOLLAND.

[*Going up to door on right.*] Sent in to get my cap. [*Sounds of a departing motor. The room is now lit only by the red glow of the fire.*]

PAUL.

Then get me mine, will you? And an overcoat. Quick! I must get home at once!

JOLLAND.

[*Stops halfway to door and whistles.*] So *that's* it? Going to bunk, are you?

PAUL.

I *am* going to bunk, Sir. I've no alternative but bunking.

JOLLAND.

Just you wait. [*He crosses to the study door, knocks, and listens; then opens door and looks in.*] No, he isn't in there. [*He turns and goes to door on right.*]

PAUL.

What are you going to do *now*, Sir?

JOLLAND.

[*At door on right.*] Going to see if Grim's anywhere about. [*He goes out.*]

PAUL.

[*Walking up and down in an agony of apprehension.*] He's off to tell the Doctor! I *know* he is! And then I *shall* be swished. Oh, what little brutes boys are!

JOLLAND.

[*Returns with a boy's overcoat, and a tweed cap of a rather aggressive pattern.*] All serene! Grim's gone out! Here's your coat. [*As he helps PAUL into overcoat.*] And an old cap of

Tinkler's. You won't be noticed so much in this.
[*He goes to the window on the right and opens it cautiously.*]

PAUL.

[*As he puts on the cap which is two sizes too large for him.*] Perhaps not—perhaps not.
[*Looking at open window.*] Am I to get out of that? Why?

JOLLAND.

[*Coming down to him.*] 'Cause Mother Grim's in the Drawing-room and she'd spot you going out by the door. And this is the nearest way.

PAUL.

To the Railway Station?

JOLLAND.

If you go near the station, you're done for! Why, Grim's bound to look for you there as soon as he knows you've bolted!

PAUL.

[*Helplessly.*] But if I don't take the train, how am I to get up to town?

JOLLAND.

Why, make for Uxbridge, you duffer! It's only about five miles off. There's a signpost at the end of the lane that'll tell you the road. And at Uxbridge there's a tram all the way to Shepherd's Bush.

PAUL.

A really excellent suggestion, my boy! It shows an intelligence beyond your years!

JOLLAND.

[*Impatiently.*] Oh, stop rotting *now!* Get out and have done with it! [*Goes back to window.*]

PAUL.

[*Approaching window.*] I'm going to get out. [*At window, with one leg over sill.*] Er—have I far to drop?

JOLLAND.

Only a few feet! Hurry up! The fellows'll be in from footer directly!

PAUL.

Oh! Then I'd better be going! [*He disappears; sounds of a fall below.*]

JOLLAND.

[*In an anxious whisper as he leans out.*] I say! You haven't hurt yourself?

PAUL'S VOICE.

[*Below.*] N—not much. I fancy I fell on some—ah—garden implements.

JOLLAND.

[*Stretching out of window.*] Oh, is *that* all?
Just you sprint like blazes, old chap! And a
jolly good run for your money!

Curtain.

THE THIRD ACT.

The scene is the Library at Westbourne Terrace, as in the First Act. The time is about 7.30 p.m. On the green leather sofa and the table are small bundles of children's wraps, hats, etc., with numbered tickets attached to them.

[As the curtain rises, knocking and ringing are heard at the front door. RHODA, a smart parlour-maid in black gown, white cap and apron, enters from the door on the right, and stands at attention by the sofa. The door leading to the hall on the left is opened by BOALER in evening dress. Every time either of the doors opens during the earlier part of the Act, children's voices and laughter are heard in the distance.]

BOALER.

[As he opens the door.] Cloak-room this way, if you please. [A NURSE enters, middle-aged, greyish hair, white uniform, with two children. CECILY, aged about eleven, in a pale pink frock under cloak and hood, and PETER, aged eight, in a white sailor suit.] Miss Barbara [addressing the NURSE] is up in the drawing-room with the others, Miss. I'll let her know you've arrived. [He goes out.]

CECILY.

[*Looking round at the bundles.*] There, Nana! I knew how it would be—we are the last!

THE NURSE.

It's no fault of *mine*, Miss Cecily! [*To RHODA.*] I had them ready time enough, but it was that shofer of ours. He *would* have his tea before he'd condescend to bring his car round!

RHODA.

Ah, I can *feel* for you, Nurse. [*With pride.*] We shall be having a motor *ourselves* soon. [*As she helps the NURSE to take off the children's cloak and coat, etc.*] Would your young lady and gentleman like some refreshment? We've begun laying supper in there; but I can easy get them some tea.

CECILY.

I think *Peter* would like some tea, Nana.

[RHODA pins a ticket on CECILY's cloak, places it in the green leather arm-chair.]

PETER.

Yes, I should,—and so would Cecily.

THE NURSE.

[*To RHODA.*] Then, if it won't be troubling you too much, Miss——

[BARBARA, in evening frock, comes in from the dining-room, followed by ELLEN, the

housemaid, in the same costume as RHODA'S.]

BARBARA.

[As she kisses CECILY and PETER.] So glad you've come, after all! I'd almost given you up. But you aren't *really* late. *[A zither is heard in the distance.]* The Marionettes are only just beginning.

CECILY.

[Eagerly.] Marionettes? Oh, are there *Ma-*
rionettes?

RHODA.

I was going to get them their tea first, Miss Barbara.

CECILY.

Oh, never mind *tea!* I'm sure Peter won't want to miss the Marionettes, *would* you, Peter?

PETER.

N—no, Cecily; but I *am* rather hungry—and thirsty, too.

CECILY.

Oh, Peter, you mustn't be a pig *now!*

PETER.

[To BARBARA.] Will there be *supper!*

BARBARA.

Yes, games and dancing first, Peter, and then supper. Father's ordered such loads of crackers!

PETER.

Very well, Cecily. Then I won't be a pig till supper.

CECILY.

[*To BARBARA.*] We *were* surprised when we got your invitation. I thought your Papa didn't approve of children's parties?

BARBARA.

He usedn't to. But Father's ever so much more sensible than he *was*.

PETER.

Will *Dick* be upstairs?

BARBARA.

[*Her face clouding for an instant.*] No, Peter, poor Dick is back at School.

CECILY.

But he *might* have come home for the party!

BARBARA.

I wanted him to; but, you see, Father was so afraid it might *unsettle* him. . . . Well, shall we go upstairs now? Nurse, *you'll* come, of course.

And, Rhoda, you and Ellen must come and look on, too.

RHODA.

Thank you, Miss, we will, as soon as ever we've finished laying the supper.

BARBARA.

Mind you do ! [*To the children, offering a hand to each.*] Come along !

CECILY.

[*Dancing with impatience.*] Oh, I don't want Peter to miss anything ! Let's hurry ! *Do* let's hurry !

[BARBARA goes out with CECILY and PETER by the door to the hall, followed by the NURSE.]

RHODA.

[*To ELLEN.*] Talk about surprises ! The last thing I ever thought to see in *this* house was a children's party !

ELLEN.

Nor yet me ! But the Master's been almost like a different bean these last few days.

RHODA.

Ever since Master Dick went back to School. I've noticed it myself. [*BOALER enters from the dining-room.*] Why, William, I thought you was upstairs !

BOALER.

[*Gloomily.*] So I 'ave been. And what I've seen is about enough for Me. [*Lowering his voice.*] You'd needn't let it go no further, but it's *my* belief the Guv'nor's goin' dotty.

RHODA.

Don't say *that*, William. He may be peculiar; but he's a deal more pleasant like.

BOALER.

Pleasantness is *one* thing, Rhoda—unbendin' to the extent *he* do is another. Why, on'y yesterday afternoon Lady Pountney drove up in her kerridge to leave cards on us. I'd just opened the door, when I 'eard a row behind me; and, if you'll believe me, there was the Guv'nor tobogg'nin' downstairs on a tea-tray!

ELLEN.

It took *me* aback the other day to see him sliding down the banisters, like Master Dick might.

BOALER.

It ain't natural in a City gentleman at *his* time o' life—let alone the Father of a Family. Take my word, his 'ed's softenin',—and the proof of it is the way he's let that fellow Paradine get round him.

RHODA.

Why, I'm sure Mr. Paradine seems a civil-spoken gentleman enough.

BOALER.

He's a wrong 'un—that's what *he* is, though he *was* the poor Mistress's brother. He's up to no good in this house! [*A ring is heard at the front door.*]

RHODA.

Who can that be? [*Going to the window, parting the curtains, and looking out.*] Why, it is Mr. Paradine! I'll let him in if you like. [*Making a movement towards the door.*]

BOALER.

You and Ellen 'll be good enough to see to the supper-table. The front door is *my* department.

RHODA.

[*As she and Ellen go towards the door to dining-room.*] Oh, it was only to save you the trouble, William. [*The ring is repeated.*]

BOALER.

All right! I ain't going to put myself out for you! I'll show you I'm not at your beck and call, my fine fellow—whatever the Guv'nor is. [*He goes out by door to the hall, leaving it open.*]

ELLEN.

[*At door.*] Come along, Rhoda! There's all them crackers to put out.

RHODA.

[*To ELLEN, as she goes through door to dining-room.*] I'm coming. But it is a pity William seems so prejudiced like against that poor Mr. Paradine! Any one can see he is a perfect gentleman—if only by his eyeglass! [*Exit.*]

[*BOALER is seen admitting PARADINE, who takes off a heavy fur-lined coat and flings it to him before entering. PARADINE is in morning clothes, and looks better turned out than he did in the First Act.*]

PARADINE.

[*Entering, and glancing round at the children's wraps, etc., in disgust, to BOALER, who is standing just inside the door.*] So this precious children's party isn't over yet, eh?

BOALER.

[*Sullenly.*] No. It ain't 'ardly begun.

PARADINE.

[*Crossing to the fireplace.*] Oh. Bring me a whisky and soda, will you?

[*BOALER suppresses his feelings, crosses to the door on the right, and goes out.*]

PARADINE.

[*To himself.*] Beastly nuisance, children's parties! [*Sees CECILY'S cloak on the arm-chair, and pitches it on to sofa at the back.*] Lumbering

up the whole place like this! [BOALER *returns with whisky decanter, syphon, and tumbler on tray.*] Put it down there. [*He flings another ticketed bundle off the table, and sits in the arm-chair.*] What time's dinner to-night?

BOALER.

There's no dinner to-night. Light supper for the juveniles at half-past nine.

PARADINE.

Bah! I want some *dinner*. When am I to have it?

BOALER.

[*Stiffly.*] I have received no orders. But if I might suggest——

PARADINE.

Well?

BOALER.

If it isn't convenient to go to your Club [PARADINE *scowls*], there's several 'ighly respectable Italian restorongs in the vicinity.

PARADINE.

So you're impertinent, are you? Take care, my man, or I may complain to your Master, and get you discharged.

BOALER.

You can if you like—I'm going to discharge

myself to-morrow. I've too much self-respect to stay in a place where the 'Ed of the 'Ouse conducts himself like *he's* doing.

PARADINE.

[*Smoothly.*] My good fellow, I quite share your uneasiness about your Master. I mean to talk to him seriously. Just let him know, quietly, that I want to see him at once.

BOALER.

You can't. *Nobody* can't at present.

PARADINE.

Nonsense! Why, where *is* he?

BOALER.

[*As he goes towards the door to the hall.*] Inside o' the Marinette Show, trying to work the figgers himself!

PARADINE.

The old fool! He must be out of his senses!

BOALER.

[*At the door.*] Ah! And lucky for you if he *keeps* out of 'em!

PARADINE.

What do you mean?

BOALER.

If he came to 'em again, *you* wouldn't be 'ere much longer. [*He goes out.*]

PARADINE.

[*Uneasily to himself.*] Confound the fellow! Can't make out what's *come* to Paul! [*Taking out a cheque from his inner pocket.*] What the devil did he mean by fooling me with this?

[*DICK enters from the dining-room; he is in evening clothes, with a white waist-coat and a white tie which is very badly tied.*]

DICK.

So you've come in, Duke? I wanted to find you. [*Sheepishly.*] I—I've just made rather an ass of myself. [*Going to fireplace.*]

PARADINE.

My dear Paul! You *surprise* me!

DICK.

I *have*, though—working those beastly Marionettes. I let one of 'em drop and trod on it, and it broke, somehow.

PARADINE.

Well; you don't expect *me* to mend it, do you?

DICK.

No. But the fellow with the Show says I shall have to pay. It'll be fifteen bob at least. I s'pose *you* couldn't lend it me, could you?

PARADINE.

What? A penniless beggar like me! You had money enough this afternoon when you went out motoring.

DICK.

I've spent all that. And I've lent *you* lots!

PARADINE.

Sorry to disoblige my own brother-in-law, but really, after the disgraceful practical joke you've played me——!

DICK.

I don't know what you're talking about. If anybody's been making you an apple-pie bed, or anything, it wasn't *me*!

PARADINE.

Apple-pie bed! I'm talking of this cheque you signed yesterday—for necessary expenses and sundries. Returned from your Bank, marked "Refer to Drawer. Signature not recognised."

DICK.

[*Alarmed.*] Does that mean it—it's *forgery*, or something?

PARADINE.

Forgery? Don't be a fool! [*Rises.*] I saw you sign it. How the deuce could you forge your own signature?

DICK.

[*Relieved.*] I *thought* I couldn't. And I say—about that fifteen bob?

PARADINE.

Oh, well, I *may* be able to manage that for you, if you'll only treat me with rather more confidence than you've been doing.

DICK.

Oh, I'll do that all right, if you'll only give me the tin.

PARADINE.

[*Giving him coins.*] Well, here's a couple of pounds for you. It's more than I can spare.

DICK.

[*Pocketing the sovereigns.*] I say—thanks most awfully. [*He turns towards the dining-room.*]

PARADINE.

[*At pedestal writing-table on left.*] Stop a bit, my friend! You must prove your gratitude, you know. [*Taking cheque-book from drawer.*] Just sit down and write out another cheque. Properly, *this* time. No tricks, mind!

DICK.

[*Sitting in writing-chair.*] I can't write it any more properly than I did the first one.

PARADINE.

Can't write better than this! [*Flourishing cheque.*] Why, look at it man, look at it! A schoolboy would be ashamed of it! [*Tears the cheque up and throws it in the waste-paper basket.*]

DICK.

I'm not, anyway. And I don't see why *you* should rag me about it.

PARADINE.

[*At the writing-table, arranging blotter, cheque-book, and papers.*] Don't you? How the deuce do you suppose I'm to raise money for you to go on with if you won't even write decently enough to satisfy your Bank? You *must* see what a false position you've put me in!

DICK.

I can't help it. Come to that, so'm *I* in a false position.

PARADINE.

You must be more careful, then. You've only to write your usual signature, whatever it is. [*Producing papers from his pocket.*] And—er—by the way, while you're about it, you may as well fill in your name on these other papers, where I've pencilled it in. I'll witness them.

DICK.

I've no time now. If I stay down here I shall miss the Marionettes. [*He gets up.*]

PARADINE.

Oh, damn the Marionettes! I must have your name if I'm to put this through successfully. As a business man, *you* know that as well as I do. So [*persuasively*] just sit down and get it over, like the sensible clear-headed chap *you are*.

DICK.

[*Sulkily.*] I'm not going to swot over writing *now*, I tell you. I've got my party to look after. [*He makes a movement as if to go.*]

PARADINE.

Come, come, my dear Paul, you mustn't be childish! I won't detain you a minute. But these documents have got to be signed *now*.

DICK.

You seem to think I'm still at school. I'm *not*, you know—I've left.

PARADINE.

Can't you understand that I'm simply advising you in your own interests?

DICK.

No, I can't. *I* believe you're trying to get me into a *row* of some sort. [*Going up to door on*

right.] You don't come old Grim over *me*, you know! If I can't write any better than a school-boy, it's no good my *trying* to, so there!

PARADINE.

[*Anxiously, as he goes towards him.*] But, my dear old chap, all I ask——!

DICK.

I've had enough of messing about here being jawed at. I'm off! [*He goes out and shuts the door.*]

PARADINE.

[*About to follow, then stops with a shrug.*] No, better not. No earthly use just yet. [*He goes to the table, collects papers, etc., and puts them in his pocket, then selects a cigar from a box on the table, lights it, and returns to the arm-chair.*] Got a bit out of hand. Touch of his old temper. [*Mixing himself a stiff whisky and soda and sitting down.*] But it won't last. He'll be back before long!

[*At the last word, the door leading to the hall opens gently, and PAUL enters. He is still in the overcoat and the big tweed cap, his boots and trousers are muddy, and he is evidently tired. He comes down on the left and round the table, till he almost faces PARADINE, who is about to drink.*]

PAUL.

You seem to be making yourself thoroughly at home!

PARADINE.

[*Starting and putting down the tumbler untouched.*] Eh? What! [*Staring.*] Why, who the dickens are *you*?

PAUL.

[*Taking off the cap.*] You ought to know me.

PARADINE.

Why, of course! And how are you, my boy? Merry and bright, eh?

PAUL.

Do I *look* merry and bright?

PARADINE.

In trouble, eh? But—oughtn't you to be at School?

PAUL.

[*Crossing to the fireplace.*] School is just the place where I ought *not* to be.

PARADINE.

[*After a whistle.*] You *don't* mean to say you've been—expelled?

PAUL.

Expelled indeed! If I'd waited for *that*! [*He warms his back by the fender.*]

PARADINE.

[*Amused.*] So you've run away, have you?

PAUL.

I should have come back long ago if I'd had any money, but I was penniless till this afternoon, when I—ah—happened to come into possession of a sovereign.

PARADINE.

More than enough for your railway fare to town, eh? I hope you remembered to take a *return*?

PAUL.

I didn't come by train. I ran—for miles—at *my* age!—to Uxbridge, where there's an electric tram to Shepherd's Bush.

PARADINE.

To put 'em off the scent. Rather smart, that! And you travelled up on the tram?

PAUL.

[*Testily.*] No, I didn't. The fool of a conductor wouldn't change my sovereign. He seemed suspicious, so I waited till he'd gone up on the roof, and then—I got out. [*He turns and warms his hands.*]

PARADINE.

[*Noticing the mud on back of PAUL'S overcoat.*] On your back, apparently.

PAUL.

[*Turning to face him.*] There wasn't time to wait till the car stopped. I tramped more miles, trying to find a shop where they would have change for a sovereign. They all said they were out of silver. [*He takes off his overcoat.*]

PARADINE.

So you had to walk the whole way?

PAUL.

[*Irritably.*] No, I hadn't. I found a taxi-cab returning empty, which put me down at the end of the Terrace.

PARADINE.

And how did you get in without being noticed?

PAUL.

By the area-gate. I have been hiding in the —ah—pantry, till I had an opportunity of slipping up here. [*Coming to the table.*] Is that whisky and soda? I shall be glad of some. [*He takes PARADINE'S tumbler.*]

PARADINE.

Well, you may take just one sip.

PAUL.

May I indeed? I'm much obliged to you. [*He drains the tumbler, to PARADINE'S amazement.*] Ha! I feel better after that! [*He sets the tumbler*

down, and takes a chair near the right end of the table.]

PARADINE.

You'll feel uncommonly queer in another minute or two, I can assure you.

PAUL.

I think not. I know the blend.

PARADINE.

Do you though? You seem to have been very nicely brought up! And have you come all this way to wolf a whisky and soda?

PAUL.

No. I've come to stay.

PARADINE.

Ah; but how long? I suppose your School-master sets a certain value on your society. He's probably on your tracks by this time.

PAUL.

He will lose some time searching for me at the railway station. Still, I fully expect he'll be here in the course of the evening, and, if he finds me before I can put things right [*rising and going towards the window uneasily*], I shall be in a worse position than ever!

PARADINE.

Sorry *for* you—but he's bound to get your brush, my boy. You'd better run off and make a clean breast of it to your dear Papa.

PAUL.

[*Turning sharply, and coming back to the fireplace.*] "My dear Papa"! Is that *another* of your jeers, or—or—is it possible that you *still* don't know who—who I really *am*? [*He stands on hearthrug, facing PARADINE.*]

PARADINE.

I haven't a notion who you really are, if you're not my young rascal of a nephew.

PAUL.

You *do* take me for my son Dick, then? [*Earnestly.*] I'm not, Paradine, I'm not! I'm your unfortunate brother-in-law, Paul.

PARADINE.

Not your own son, but your own Father, eh? I *knew* all that whisky would upset you before long!

PAUL.

I tell you I'm your brother-in-law, Paul Bultitude. Don't you believe me yet?

PARADINE.

Tell me. Do you get much time for *play* at

this School of yours? Been finding your work a bit too stiff, haven't you?

PAUL.

[*Going a step towards him.*] Never mind what I've found it. I ask you—Do I look, do I speak or behave, like an ordinary schoolboy?

PARADINE.

Can't say; but, for the sake of the rising generation, I *hope* not.

PAUL.

[*By fireplace.*] Ah, you're jaunty enough, now. But you weren't quite so jaunty seven years ago [PAR. *starts*], when you came to me to get you out of a rather serious trouble.

PARADINE.

[*Rises.*] How on earth did you come to hear of *that*? [*Moving to left.*] I see. From your fool of a Father!

PAUL.

No. From your own lips. In this very room. [*Seats himself in the leather arm-chair.*] Have you forgotten how you promised that, if I'd only give you one more chance, you'd keep straight for the future? Shall I remind you how that promise was kept? [*Crossing his legs.*] I will, if you wish.

PARADINE.

[*Impressed as he comes to Club-fender.*] Thanks. I won't trouble you. [*Seats himself on fender.*] It's devilish queer—but I'm hanged if I don't believe you *must* be Paul! But what *I* should like to know is this: if you are, how the deuce do you come to be so like Dick?

PAUL.

Through that infernal talisman you gave him. I happened to express a wish—merely for the sake of conversation—that he and I could change places. I was holding the stone at the time, and—and the abominable thing *worked*!

PARADINE.

And then Master Dick sent you off to School as his understudy? Ha-ha-ha!

PAUL.

You may laugh—but it's a serious matter enough for me!

PARADINE.

[*Convulsed.*] I know—I know! Devilish serious! Ho-ho-ho! Forgive a fleeting smile, my—my dear Paul, but for the life of me——! Ha-ha-ha! I do assure you my heart bleeds for you. *What* you must have had to put up with! Ho-ho-ho! Cruel! Ha-ha! Oh, *cruel*!

PAUL.

It will be even more cruel if I'm caught here as I am now. I shall be taken back and flogged, Sir—yes, flogged!

PARADINE.

[*Wiping his eyes.*] Flogged! Ho-ho-ho! Excuse me again! I *do* feel for you—deeply. But I don't exactly see how *I* can help you.

PAUL.

You—and you alone, Paradine—can persuade my unhappy boy to part with that stone.

PARADINE.

[*Thinking hard.*] I wonder. I wonder if I *could* get it back.

PAUL.

He would be sure to give it up to *you*. I know you have contrived to gain considerable influence over him.

PARADINE.

He is not so prejudiced as his worthy parent—he *trusts* me, Paul. In fact, he is prepared to back me in one or two financial ventures which *you* would probably consider a trifle speculative.

PAUL.

It's more than likely. But why do you mention that *now*?

PARADINE.

Why? Oh, merely to show that I shall be obliging you at some personal sacrifice. And—if I *should* succeed in recovering this stone—what do you suggest I should do next?

PAUL.

You *usedn't* to be so dense, Paradine! Why, wish this cursed spell removed—reversed, of course! For I take it you've not used the talisman yourself yet. [*Anxiously.*] You *haven't*, have you?

PARADINE.

No, not yet—luckily. Not *yet*. I see the idea *now*. . . . And, if I consent to carry it out, how do you propose to—well, to make it worth my while?

PAUL.

[*Crossing his legs and joining the tips of his fingers.*] You would find me ready to do anything—in reason.

PARADINE.

Oh, of course—in *reason*. And—in plain figures—how much?

PAUL.

Without pledging myself to any definite sum at present, I should be willing to start you in one of the Colonies in some occupation by which you could make an honest living.

PARADINE.

My dear fellow, this is too generous! It opens out a new vista to me! An honest living is one of the few luxuries I have hitherto been compelled to deny myself! [*Rising and offering his hand, which PAUL takes reluctantly.*] Thank you, Paul! Then that's settled. I'll trust to your liberality, and do my best to get round Master Dick.

PAUL.

Do so—and you shall not lose your reward.

PARADINE.

I'm quite sure I shan't. [*DICK's voice is heard singing a snatch of a song in the dining-room.*] Hssh! [*To PAUL in a rapid whisper.*] Get out of this—quick!

PAUL.

[*Rising hastily and going towards window curtains.*] I'll get behind these.

PARADINE.

[*By the table.*] No, no, I can't have you in the room—it's too risky!

PAUL.

But where *am* I to go?

PARADINE.

The pantry! Anywhere! So long as you

clear out! [DICK'S voice from dining-room: "I say, Duke, are you in there?"]

PAUL.

[As PARADINE bundles him out into hall.] I will not go to the pantry! [He goes out to the hall. PARADINE closes the door on him, then steals back to the leather arm-chair and sinks into it.]

PARADINE.

[In a drowsy voice.] Who's that? Any one calling me?

[DICK enters from the dining-room, with a coloured paper cap on his head, and carrying a cracker in his hand.]

DICK.

It's only me, Duke. I say, have you been asleep?

PARADINE.

[Rubbing his eyes.] I fancy I must have dropped off for a minute. Why?

DICK.

I thought I heard you talking to somebody.

PARADINE.

Really? No idea I talked in my sleep. Well, what do you want?

DICK.

[*Sitting on table, left of PARADINE.*] Oh, only to say I'm sorry and that. For being so beastly to you just now.

[*The door from the hall opens very softly, and PAUL looks in. DICK has his back to him, concealing him from PARADINE. PAUL tiptoes swiftly to window on left, and conceals himself behind curtains.*]

PARADINE.

Eh? Oh, *that's* all right; say no more about it. Won't you sit down?

DICK.

You're sure you aren't in a bait? Look here [*showing the cracker*]; I just bagged this off the supper-table in there. Will you pull it with me—just to show it's *Pax*?

PARADINE.

Not now. I want a talk with you. Sit down.

DICK.

[*Taking the chair on left of table.*] You won't be long? They're having games upstairs.

PARADINE.

You and I will have our little game down here [*with meaning*], young Dick.

DICK.

[*Fidgetting nervously with the cracker.*] "Dick"?
"Young Dick"! What d'you mean, calling me
"young Dick"?

PARADINE.

You know as well as I do that your name is
Richard.

DICK.

[*Letting the cracker drop.*] I say! I do believe
you've guessed!

PARADINE.

It wasn't very difficult.

DICK.

[*Heavily.*] If you've spotted me, *everybody* can!

PARADINE.

Much obliged for the compliment! But every-
body's eyes aren't as sharp as mine. And really
you're admirably disguised. I should uncom-
monly like to know how you managed it?

DICK.

[*Sullenly.*] Since you're so sharp, you can
find out!

PARADINE.

Well, I'll try. Let me see. . . . Ah, I've got
it! You've been meddling with that Indian
talisman I gave you!

DICK.

Dad meddled first. All *I* did was to wish he'd go quietly back to school.

PARADINE.

And he went! There must have been more in that stone than I ever imagined! [*Rises.*] Do you know, I should rather like to have another look at it—that is, if you happen to have it about you? [*PAUL'S face is seen between the curtains, and shows approval and expectation.*]

DICK.

Oh, I daresay! See any green? [*PAUL'S expression changes to irritation and surprise.*]

PARADINE.

Why, it's no earthly use to you now! And surely, considering I gave it you, you can't object to let me have it for a moment? [*PAUL'S face is more hopeful again.*]

DICK.

But I jolly well *do* object. "Give a thing and take a thing is the Black Men's plaything," you know!

PARADINE.

[*Moving round to left.*] Whatever may be the point of that rather cryptic proverb, I can only tell you this. You'll find me a useful friend, but

a devilish unpleasant enemy. [*Standing on the right of DICK.*] Think that over.

DICK.

You said just now it was *Pax*! [*Getting up, and sitting on the edge of the table facing PARADINE.*] How d'you mean—about being my enemy?

PARADINE.

[*Sitting in chair on left of DICK, with his face to the audience.*] You know as well as I do that, if I chose to speak out, you wouldn't be able to keep your end up any longer. [*PAUL looks through the curtains once more, reassured.*]

DICK.

You wouldn't do a caddish thing like that!

PARADINE.

I should *have* to, if my conscience insisted on it.

DICK.

[*Disgustedly.*] Why, you're talking just like that beast Chawner!

PARADINE.

Really? That's curious, as I haven't the pleasure of Mr. Chawner's acquaintance. I may tell you that all my life I've been handicapped by an exceptionally keen sense of honour. And I ask myself—Can I, as an honourable man, stand by

and see my own brother-in-law, whom I have every reason to love and respect, kept out of his rights when one word from me——?

DICK.

If you mean to sneak, don't pie-jaw! Do it, and have done with it!

PARADINE.

I *ought* to—and yet, the keenest sense of honour, after constant use for several years, is apt to get a little—er—blunted. Sometimes I fancy mine wants resetting.

DICK.

[*Impatiently.*] Oh, *chuck* it! Are you going to tell, or aren't you?

PARADINE.

One thing I'm sure of. If you could only have the sense to avoid betraying yourself by these schoolboy follies, no one would ever suspect such a steady-going old buffer as you *look* of being anybody but yourself. [*Significantly.*] That is—if I kept *my* mouth shut. [PAUL'S *face looks puzzled.*]

DICK.

What's the good of saying that if you *won't* keep it shut?

PARADINE.

I will, my boy, I will—if you'll only be guided

by me! I'll coach you till you're as good a man of business as ever your Father was—and a much better man of the world! As for *him*, we can easily pack him off to some school abroad. [PAUL'S expression grows doubtful and suspicious.]

DICK.

No, that wouldn't be cricket. I promised him I'd send him to Harrow next term. [PAUL scowls.]

PARADINE.

[*With a grin.*] Well, well, I'll leave that to your parental discretion. Meanwhile, I'll stand by you—on one condition.

DICK.

What condition?

PARADINE.

Simply that you let me take care of that stone. [DICK rises suddenly, and moves towards right, PAUL having only just time to withdraw behind the window-curtains; as DICK'S hand goes to his waistcoat pocket.] Ah, I thought you had it about you. [Getting off the table, and approaching him.] Hand it over.

DICK.

I can't. I promised not to part with it. [*He begins to turn out the contents of his pockets on the table.*]

PARADINE.

' Promised whom ?

DICK.

[*Bringing out some toys such as are contained in crackers from various pockets.*] Dad. This afternoon.

PARADINE.

[*Going to the fireplace.*] You young block-head ! . . . Do I understand you to refuse ?

DICK

[*Still searching his pockets.*] I—I can't give it you now.

PARADINE.

Then you must take the consequences. [*Pretending to be about to ring.*] I shall ring for the butler and expose you.

DICK.

[*Searching again.*] No, no. Wait a jiff !

PARADINE.

I shall not give you much longer.

PAUL.

[*Suddenly coming out from curtains.*] Stop ! I forbid you to part with it. Do you hear me, Dick ?

DICK.

[*Recoiling.*] It's Dad! It's Dad!

PARADINE.

[*Furiously to PAUL.*] So you've been eaves-dropping, have you? Didn't I tell you to clear out and leave him to me?

PAUL.

I will *not* leave him to you! I can't trust you. Don't *you* trust him either, Dick. Listen to me. If you knew all I've suffered at Crichton House among those awful boys, you'd pity me, you would indeed! You *can't* let me go back there to be flogged! If—if I've had my failings as a Father, Heaven knows I've been punished enough already! . . . Be generous now, my boy, give up that talisman to me—not to *that* fellow—and I swear you will never regret it!

DICK.

[*Still fumbling in his pockets.*] I will, Dad, I will—as soon as ever I *find* it!

PAUL.

Find it? Isn't it on your—*my* watch-chain?

DICK.

It's got loose. It isn't in any of my pockets. I—I'm afraid it's *lost*!

PAUL AND PARADINE.

[*Together.*] { Lost? When did you see it last?
 { Lost? Where?

DICK.

I don't remember. I expect it fell off in the motor-car coming home.

PAUL.

I *told* you it wasn't properly fastened!

PARADINE.

Confounded carelessness!

[*Ringing and knocking at front-door.*]

PAUL.

[*Starting.*] Who's that? [*About to go to window, but stopping halfway; to PARADINE.*] You'd better look!

PARADINE.

[*Going to window, and looking through the curtains.*] I see a tall person with a beard, in a soft hat and an Inverness cloak.

PAUL AND DICK.

[*Together.*] { Then it is Dr. Grimstone!
 { Good Lord! It's old Grim! [*They stand paralysed.*]

PARADINE.

[*By the window, enjoying the situation.*] A little awkward, *isn't* it? [*To PAUL.*] But, after all, my dear Paul, you can easily explain the situation to him.

PAUL.

Explain! I gave *that* up long ago! It's hopeless! [*The front door is heard shutting.*]

PARADINE.

They've let him in. [*To DICK.*] Dick, my boy, do you feel inclined to see the Doctor, and make a full confession?

DICK.

What! Not if I *know* it!

PARADINE.

[*To PAUL.*] Then I suppose I must see him myself. [*At the door leading to hall.*] Don't worry, either of you. I'll try and get rid of him somehow. [*He goes out.*]

PAUL.

I *must* find that stone before. . . . [*Going down on his hands and knees, and searching the carpet.*] Dick! do you think you dropped it *here*?

DICK.

P'raps. Or else the dining-room. I don't know. [*Going to window.*] You'd better hide,

Dad! I'm going to. [*He gets behind the window-curtains.*]

PAUL.

[*On the floor, searching wildly.*] I daren't let Paradine get hold of it! Ah! Is *that* it? . . . No—only fluff. [*Rising.*] It's not here! [*Going towards door on right.*] I'll try the dining-room.

DULCIE.

[*Enters from hall, in hat and cloak, and sees PAUL.*] Dick!

PAUL.

[*Turning.*] Miss Grimstone! Er—you needn't mention that you've seen me! [*Is about to go to dining-room.*]

DICK.

[*Looking through the curtains.*] It's Dulcie!

DULCIE.

[*To PAUL.*] Papa knows you're here! Your Uncle told him.

PAUL.

Oh, *did* he?

DULCIE.

Yes, the sneak! Don't hide from me! [*Going towards PAUL.*] When I made Papa bring me here on purpose to make it up!

DICK.

[*Coming out from curtains, in complete forgetfulness of his altered appearance.*] So long as you'll be friends again, I don't care *what* happens!

DULCIE.

[*Surprised, to DICK.*] Why, it's Mr. Bultitude! I'll be friends with you too, if you'll promise not to be hard on poor Dick. [*Coming towards him.*]

DICK.

[*With a faint giggle.*] I shan't be hard on him.

DULCIE.

[*To Dick, after feeling in her pocket, and producing the stone.*] Oh, I found this funny green stone after you'd gone this afternoon. Does it belong to you?

PAUL.

[*Rushing down to DULCIE'S left.*] Keep it in your hand, my dear! Don't ask any questions—there's no time! Just repeat after me: "I wish Dick and his Father were their right selves again."

DULCIE.

[*Standing between PAUL and DICK, mystified.*] I wish Dick and his Father were their right selves again. [*There is a rumble as before, and the electric lights flicker out and in again.*] The former PAUL and DICK show by their manner that they have

become the MR. BULTITUDE *and* DICK *of the opening.*
Oh! What *have* I done now?

MR. BULTITUDE.

[*Kissing her.*] Done me the very greatest service, my dear! And now you can give me that thing back. [*Taking the stone from DULCIE.*]

DICK.

And we really *are* friends again, Dulcie?

DULCIE.

Yes, if you won't call me "Little Miss Grimstone" ever again.

PARADINE'S VOICE.

[*Outside in hall.*] No. *This* way, Dr. Grimstone, please.

MR. BULTITUDE.

[*To DICK.*] You'd better run off and get your clothes brushed.

DICK.

[*Glancing at the mud on his clothes in some surprise.*] I'll go and find Barbara. Come along, Dulcie! [*He takes DULCIE'S hand and they run off together through the door to the dining-room, as the other door opens and DR. GRIMSTONE enters, followed by PARADINE.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Coming down to MR. BULTITUDE, whom PARADINE watches with some anxiety.*] My dear Mr. Bultitude, I believe you are already aware of the unhappy reason for my intrusion?

MR. BULTITUDE.

[*Shaking hands gravely.*] I am, Dr. Grimstone, I am. Won't you sit down? [PARADINE *relieved and delighted by what he supposes to be DICK'S composure.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Thank you. [*He takes the chair at the right end of the table, MR. BULTITUDE sitting in the green arm-chair, while PARADINE is looking under the sofa, and into the dining-room.*] I am simply at a loss to imagine what can have induced your misguided boy to quit the shelter of my roof.

MR. BULTITUDE.

It does seem *most* unaccountable. However, I have great hopes that, after he has returned with you to Crichton House, he will give no more trouble.

PARADINE.

[*Coming down on MR. BULTITUDE'S left.*] I think, my dear Paul, we may safely leave that to Dr. Grimstone. [*Lowering his voice.*] Excellent! Couldn't be better, my boy!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

I will take him back as soon as—— [*Looking round the room.*] I was given to understand that the boy was *here*?

PARADINE.

He *was*, but he's given us the slip for the moment. [*Crossing to window.*] Come out, you young rascal, will you? [*Examining the recess behind the curtains.*] No, he's not *here*. [*Crossing towards dining-room.*] But he can't be *very* far off. I'll soon find him for you. [*To MR. BULTITUDE in an undertone, as he passes him.*] Admirable! Go on like this, and you're as right as rain! [*He goes out into the dining-room.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Remarkably pleasant person, your brother-in-law, Mr. Bultitude—so helpful and sympathetic!

MR. BULTITUDE.

I'm sorry, Dr. Grimstone, but there I can *not* agree with you.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*With an embarrassed cough.*] Oh? Really! Dear me! Of course I was not aware——

MR. BULTITUDE.

Naturally. [*By fireplace.*] And I needn't

trouble you with my family affairs—*now*. [*Looking at the stone and then at the fire.*] What a miserable fire! [*He pokes it up.*]

DICK'S VOICE.

[*Outside in dining-room.*] Let go, I say! Let go!

PARADINE'S VOICE.

[*Outside.*] I've got you now, you young scamp. [*He comes in, dragging DICK by the collar, and followed by BARBARA and DULCIE in great distress.*]

PARADINE.

Here's your young truant, Doctor! Just run him to earth. And I fancy my brother-in-law here will be obliged by your removing him as soon as possible. Eh, Paul?

MR. BULTITUDE.

I shall be obliged, Paradine, by your attending to your own affairs. Leave my boy alone. [*He touches bell by fireplace. PAR. releases DICK. DR. GRIMSTONE, puzzled and on his dignity, turns and examines the books and pictures with ostentatious tactfulness. DICK goes to DULCIE and BARBARA.*]

PARADINE.

[*Coming up to MR. BULTITUDE.*] Why—why—what's come to you? . . . [*He understands.*] So you've found that thing after all!

MR. BULTITUDE.

I have. And I'm my own man again!

PARADINE.

[*Recovering himself.*] You don't say so? Delighted to hear it, my dear Paul! Congratulate you, I'm sure. And—ahem—since you've no further use for that little tablet of mine——

MR. BULTITUDE.

I shall take good care it does no further mischief. [*He throws the stone into the middle of the fire. It bursts with a loud explosion. BARBARA and DULCIE scream and retreat to left of stage, followed by DICK.*]

PARADINE.

[*Furiously, in an undertone.*] Infernal selfishness!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

I fancy, Mr. Bultitude, a small piece of stone must have found its way into your coal.

MR. BULTITUDE.

So it would seem.

DR. GRIMSTONE.

It might have been highly dangerous. I consider, my dear Sir, that you have had a most fortunate escape.

MR. BULTITUDE.

I'm rather inclined to agree with you, Dr. Grimstone.

[BOALER enters.]

BOALER.

[To MR. BULTITUDE.] Was it *you* rang, Sir?

MR. BULTITUDE.

Yes. To show Mr. Paradine out. He is leaving at once.

BOALER.

[*Beaming with delight at MR. B.'s recovery of his former dignity.*] Very good, Sir.

PARADINE.

[To MR. B.] At once, eh? A trifle sudden, Paul!

MR. BULTITUDE.

Boaler will pack your things and send them after you. You hear, Boaler?

BOALER.

Yes, Sir. With pleasure, Sir!

PARADINE.

Deuced obliging fellow, that! I wish, Paul, I could make you see that, as a matter of fact I've been acting in *your* interests all along.

MR. BULTITUDE.

I daresay you do. But you won't get your wish.

PARADINE.

I see. [*Moving towards left.*] Good-bye, Barbara, my dear. Don't forget your poor old—— [*She turns away indignantly; he continues to DICK.*] And so, old chap, you've got to go back to School after all? Rough luck—but I did my best for you. [*DICK puts his arm round DULCIE, and looks at PAR. without speaking.*] And this is my reward! [*Turns at door, and looks at MR. B. who is still standing on the hearthrug.*] Which reminds me. A little while ago, my dear Paul, you were good enough to suggest giving me a fresh start in the Colonies. I merely put it to you—but wouldn't it be worth your while to repeat that offer?

MR. BULTITUDE.

H'm. Perhaps. You can call to-morrow morning at Mincing Lane.

PARADINE.

Right! I'll look in about lunch time. Till then—ta-ta. Ta-ta! [*He goes out. BOALER closes the door. A moment or two later the front-door is heard to shut. DR. GRIMSTONE comes down.*]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[*Severely to DICK.*] And now, Richard, I should like to know what you have to say for yourself?

DULCIE.]

[*Coming forward with DICK.*] He's very sorry, Papa. And he'll never run away again!

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Hush, my dear. . . . My little daughter, Mr. Bultitude. I must apologise for bringing her, but——

MR. BULTITUDE.

It was most fortunate that you *did* bring her, Dr. Grimstone! As for this boy of mine, if *I* forgive him, surely you can do the same?

DR. GRIMSTONE.

Well, well—I cannot resist a parent's plea. [*Calling DICK to him and patting his head.*] His offence is condoned.

MR. BULTITUDE.

And I hope Dr. Grimstone, you will give us the pleasure of staying to supper?

DR. GRIMSTONE.

H'm. We *could* leave by a later train. I shall be delighted to stay, my dear Sir, delighted.

[*The piano upstairs is heard playing the opening bars of "Sir Roger de Coverley."*]

MR. BULTITUDE.

"Sir Roger," eh! Dr. Grimstone, you'll take

part in that, won't you? With my Barbara for a partner? [BARBARA goes to DR. GRIMSTONE.]

DR. GRIMSTONE.

[As he offers his arm to BARBARA.] I fear I shall prove a most incompetent performer.

BARBARA.

Oh, I'll pull you through it, somehow! [She goes out with him; DICK is about to follow with DULCIE.]

MR. BULTITUDE.

[Stopping DICK.] There's just a word I wanted to say to you, my boy.

DICK.

[To DULCIE.] Oh! I say, you won't dance with any other fellow, will you?

DULCIE.

Mind you come soon, then. [Exit.]

DICK.

[Apprehensively.] Well, Dad?

MR. BULTITUDE.

[In some embarrassment.] Er—when you get back, you must be prepared for some unpleasantness from a very violent boy of the name of Tipping——

DICK.

Tipping! If he tries *that* on, I'll jolly well punch his ugly head off!

MR. BULTITUDE.

[*Delighted.*] Will you, though? Punch his head off by all means! Oh, and by the way—about pocket-money. I must give you some to go back with. That is if—— [*Feeling in his trouser-pocket.*] Yes; I have! [*He brings out the coins PARADINE has given DICK and regards them with surprise and satisfaction.*] Two sovereigns! [*Awkwardly as he gives them to DICK.*] Look here—one's for you, and the other for that boy Jolland.

DICK.

[*Pocketing the money.*] Thanks most awf'ly! I say, Dad! [*Suddenly flinging his arms around his Father and hugging him affectionately.*] You have been a brick to me, and I'll never forget it! I—I promise you I won't! [MR. BULTITUDE pats him on the shoulder; "Sir Roger" strikes up again, louder, and DICK releases his Father.] They've begun! [*He seizes MR. BULTITUDE'S hand.*] Come on, Dad! [*He drags him out, both dancing to the tune, as the curtain falls.*]

THE END.

PRINTED BY
WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.

At all Booksellers and Bookstalls

SMITH, ELDER & CO.'S NEW 1s. NET SERIES

POCKET VOLUMES. WITH FRONTISPIECES.

BOUND IN CLOTH, FCAP. 8vo

1s. NET EACH

1. Deeds that Won the Empire
Dr. W. H. Fitchett
2. The Cruise of the "Cachalot" Round
the World after Sperm Whales
Frank T. Bullen
3. Fights for the Flag
Dr. W. H. Fitchett
4. The Log of a Sea Waif
Frank T. Bullen
5. The Gamekeeper at Home
Richard Jefferies
6. A Londoner's Log Book
Rt. Hon. G. W. E. Russell

London: SMITH, ELDER & Co., 15 Waterloo Place, S.W.

Thin Paper Edition of

Henry Seton Merriman's Novels, in 14 Volumes

**With an Introduction in the First Volume by
E. F. S. and S. G. T.**

**In clear type and handy size. Fcap. 8vo,
gilt top**

Each Volume { **2s. net in Cloth**
 { **3s. net in Leather**

Or the 14 Volumes in { **31s. 6d. net in Cloth or**
 { **gold lettered case** } **50s. net in Leather**

TITLES OF THE VOLUMES

- 1. The Slave of the Lamp**
- 2. The Sowers**
- 3. From One Generation to Another**
- 4. With Edged Tools**
- 5. The Grey Lady**
- 6. Flotsam**
- 7. In Kedar's Tents**
- 8. Roden's Corner**
- 9. The Isle of Unrest**
- 10. The Velvet Glove**
- 11. The Vultures**
- 12. Barlasch of the Guard**
- 13. Tomaso's Fortune, and other
Stories**
- 14. The Last Hope**

**LONDON: SMITH, ELDER & CO.
15 Waterloo Place, S.W.**

Sir A. Conan Doyle's Works.

New Illustrated 3s. 6d. Edition. Crown 8vo.
in Uniform Red Cloth Binding.

The Tragedy of the "Korosko."

With 40 Illustrations.

Uncle Bernac : A Memory of the Empire.

Third Edition. With 12 Illustrations.

Rodney Stone.

Fourth Impression. With 8 Illustrations.

The White Company.

Thirtieth Edition. Revised. With 8 Illustrations.

The Green Flag, and Other Stories of War and Sport. With a Frontispiece.

The Adventures of Gerard.

With 16 Illustrations by W. B. WOLLEN.

The Hound of the Baskervilles.

With Illustrations by SIDNEY PAGET.

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

With 25 Illustrations by SIDNEY PAGET.

The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes.

With Illustrations by SIDNEY PAGET.

The Return of Sherlock Holmes.

Illustrated by SIDNEY PAGET.

The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard.

With 24 Illustrations by W. B. WOLLEN.

The Sign of Four. Illustrated.

Sir Nigel.

With Illustrations by ARTHUR TWIDLE.

A Duet : with an Occasional Chorus.

10th Edition.

London : Smith, Elder, & Co., 15 Waterloo Place, S.W.

The Centenary Biographical Edition of the Works of W. M. Thackeray.

For the purpose of this Edition **LADY RITCHIE** has re-arranged her Biographical Prefaces to the Works, adding many new letters and illustrations, together with some writings of the great Novelist hitherto unpublished.

In 26 Volumes. Demy 8vo. Gilt top, 6s. net each.

With the original Steel Plates and other Illustrations printed on a specially-made paper. The Edition will be printed in large type on fine paper, and it will form the largest and handsomest Edition obtainable.

An attractive feature of the Edition will be the **26 Portraits** of Thackeray—one being given, as Frontispiece, in each volume—arranged in chronological order, from the age of three onwards; some of the portraits appearing for the first time.

					1910
Vols. 1 & 2.	VANITY FAIR, 2 vols.	...	...	ready	Nov. 15
„ 3 & 4	PENDENNIS, 2 vols.	...	...	„	Dec. 15
					1911
Vol. 5.	YELLOWPLUSH PAPERS, &c. ...	„	„	„	Jan. 16
„ 6.	HOGGARTY DIAMOND, &c. ...	„	„	„	„

and two volumes will be issued each succeeding month until the completion of the Edition on Nov. 15, 1911.

Prospectuses post free on application.

Works by Frank T. Bullen, F.R.G.S.

Crown 8vo, **6s.** each.

Our Heritage the Sea.

With a Frontispiece by ARTHUR TWIDLE.

PALL MALL GAZETTE.—"Mr. Bullen's book ought to be in the hands of every Briton who has a scrap of pride in his country's annals . . . he has here attained a result that makes the nation his debtor."

Back to Sunny Seas.

With 8 Full-page Illustrations in Colour by A. S. FORREST, R.I.

STANDARD.—"Perhaps the best account of a trip to the West Indies since Charles Kingsley gave his first impressions of them in the magic pages of 'At Last.' A breezy, attractive book."

Sea Wrack. A Collection of Stories of Adventure at Sea.

With 8 Illustrations by ARTHUR TWIDLE. Second Impression.

VANITY FAIR.—"A delightful volume. . . . The seafaring man is an open book to Mr. Bullen."

Deep Sea Plunderings.

With 8 Full-page Illustrations by ARTHUR TWIDLE. Third Impression.

SPECTATOR.—"There is something in the book to please almost every taste."

Told in the Dog Watches.

With Two Illustrations by CHARLES J. FOLKARD.

COUNTRY LIFE.—"The ring of truth is in these sea stories and sketches of Mr. Bullen's."

The Men of the Merchant Service. Being the Polity of the Mercantile Marine for 'Longshore Readers. Second Impression. Large post 8vo. 7s. 6d.

ACADEMY.—"A book that is bulged with seacraft, and resembles the perfect sailor whose every hair is a rope-yarn and every drop of blood Stockholm tar."

The Cruise of the "Cachalot."

With 8 Full-page Illustrations and a Chart. 14th Impression. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.

TIMES.—"A book which cannot but fascinate all lovers of the sea."

The Log of a Sea Waif: Being the Recollections of the First Four Years of my Sea Life. With 8 Full-page Illustrations by ARTHUR TWIDLE. 6th Impression. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.

TIMES.—"Full of thrilling adventure, admirably told."

The Way they have in the Navy.

Third Impression. Crown 8vo, paper covers, 1s. ; cloth, 1s. 6d.

SPECTATOR.—"We recommend it most heartily and without any misgiving."

London : Smith, Elder, & Co., 15 Waterloo Place, S.W.

Works by W. H. Fitchett, B.A., LL.D.

Crown 8vo. **6s. each.**

A Pawn in the Game.

DAILY TELEGRAPH.—"A book to be cordially recommended, both to those who enjoy a good story and to those who enjoy adventure."

The Commander of the "Hirondelle."

With 16 Full-page Illustrations.

ATHENÆUM.—"An admirable sea story. . . . It is good literature, too, and written with historical and technical knowledge."

Nelson and his Captains: Sketches of Famous Seamen. With 11 Portraits and a Facsimile Letter. Third Impression.

PUNCH.—"My Baronite having read all Dr. Fitchett's tales of battles on land, thinks his best piece is his sea piece. . . . Saxon and Celt reading the glowing narrative will feel proud to know it's all true."

The Tale of the Great Mutiny.

Eighth and considerably Enlarged Impression. With 8 Portraits and 4 Plans.

GUARDIAN.—"It is almost impossible to lay the book down. The story of those summer months of 1857 must ever appeal to English readers."

Fights for the Flag.

Sixth Edition. With 16 Portraits and 13 Plans.

SPECTATOR.—"One of the best collection of popular battle studies ever given to the public."

Deeds that Won the Empire.

Twenty-fifth Edition. With 16 Portraits and 11 Plans.

SPECTATOR.—"The book cannot but take the reader by storm wherever it finds him."

Wellington's Men: Some Soldier-Autobiographies.

SPECTATOR.—"Mr. Fitchett has ere this sounded the clarion and filled the life to good purpose, but he has never done better work than in rescuing from oblivion the narratives which appear in this volume."

How England Saved Europe: the Story of the Great War (1793-1815). In 4 vols. with Portraits, Facsimiles, and Plans. Fourth Impression. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. each.

GUARDIAN.—"Mr. Fitchett has achieved a real success, more enthralling than half the novels published."

Wesley and his Century: a Study in Spiritual Forces. With a Photogravure Frontispiece from the Portrait of John Wesley by GEORGE ROMNEY and Four Facsimiles of Letters, &c. Third Impression. 6s. net.

BOOKMAN.—"A deeply interesting volume. . . . The story is good as biography and rich in material."

London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 15 Waterloo Place, S.W.

A Novel of Empire.

With a Frontispiece by ALBERT STERNER, and Two Landscape Illustrations.

Canadian Born.

By Mrs. HUMPHRY WARD.

SECOND IMPRESSION.

PALL MALL GAZETTE.—‘A capital novel and a first-rate piece of political instruction. . . . It is a novel that English and Canadian readers will equally enjoy, and which will help the confidence and sincerity of their Imperial fellowship.’

SCOTSMAN.—‘Popularity, if not indeed the standing of a classic, may be predicted for Mrs. Humphry Ward’s story in the Dominion . . . one of her chief triumphs as a literary artist and diviner.’

BIRMINGHAM DAILY POST.—‘The love story is related with great delicacy and tenderness of feeling, while, as a whole, the book reveals very markedly one valuable quality . . . the quality which R. L. Stevenson described as “gusto.”’

YORKSHIRE DAILY OBSERVER.—‘The novel will be an indispensable companion to a journey across the Rockies. Lady Elizabeth Merton is one of Mrs. Ward’s most graceful heroines.’

The Wild Heart. 3RD IMPRESSION.

By M. E. FRANCIS (Mrs. FRANCIS BLUNDELL).

SCOTSMAN.—‘Mrs. Blundell has looked deeply into the heart of rural Dorsetshire. . . . “The Wild Heart” is one of the finest of her Wessex idylls.’

NEWCASTLE CHRONICLE.—‘A really moving human drama, full of passion, of tenderness and tragedy. The story is told with not a little humour amidst its tragedy.’

A Newmarket Squire.

By EDWARD H. COOPER.

WORLD.—‘A decidedly pleasant book to read. It is full of excitement, the dialogue is delightful . . . whether Mr. Cooper writes best of sport, the beauties of Nature, of lovers, or of children, there is no doubt whatever that he writes with exceeding charm about all.’

WINNING POST.—‘Mr. Cooper in his new book has surpassed all his previous efforts, and has given us a story which deserves to become one of the successes of the season. . . .’

Betty Carew. 2ND IMPRESSION.

By KATHARINE TYNAN.

LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.—‘An altogether delightful story . . . full of sweetness and romance.’

EVENING STANDARD.—‘Breezy and delightful, full of humour and charm.’

THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

Published
Monthly.
Price
1s.

Annual Subscription, including postage, to any address in the Postal Union, 14s. (or to Canada and Newfoundland, 13s.), payable in advance.

SOME PRESS OPINIONS.

British Weekly.

‘The CORNHILL is always good—a judicious blend of fiction, biography, and miscellaneous articles.’

Public Opinion.

‘A most readable magazine. It is readable from beginning to end, and with matter worth reading.’

Country Life.

‘The Editor of the CORNHILL MAGAZINE is usually successful in getting together a number of anecdotal literary articles.’

Guardian.

‘The counsel of perfection is to purchase the CORNHILL, that you may not only enjoy its contents but keep them to show a friend.’

OPINIONS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIANS.

Arbroath.

‘My Committee are of opinion that there is room for one of its kind. (Personally, I think there is only one of the CORNHILL kind, and that is the CORNHILL itself.) I may say at once that the CORNHILL exactly meets the wants of a select body of readers.’

Hampstead.

‘I find upon inquiry at our five Libraries that the CORNHILL is well read, and certainly it appeals to a section of readers who can appreciate better literary fare than is offered in most of the modern monthlies. May I take this opportunity of expressing my own admiration for the high literary tone which you preserve in the CORNHILL.’

Kinross.

‘The magazine is much appreciated by our better-class readers and is well read.’

To be had of all Booksellers and Newsagents, or direct from the
Publishers,
London: SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 Waterloo Place, S.W.

